

Adult

# Sabbath School Lessons

God and Our Destiny



JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 1987

COMBINED  
PROGRAM HELPS  
FOR THE SMALL CHURCH

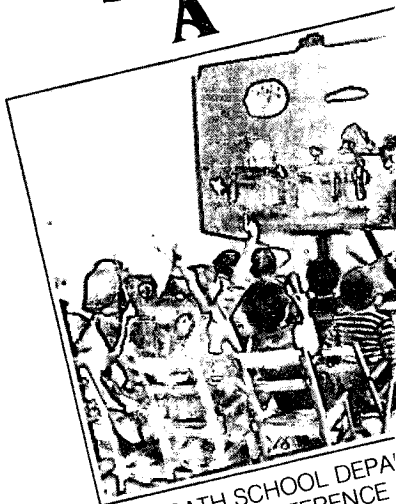
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SABBATH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT  
GENERAL CONFERENCE



# Contents

1. How to Understand Prophecy
2. Judgment and Mercy
3. Revealer of Mysteries
4. Able to the Uttermost
5. The High Price of Pride
6. Weighed and Found Wanting
7. Survival of the Holiest
8. Worldly Powers and a Heavenly Court
9. World Powers Oppose God's Truth
10. Keys to Understanding
11. Michael, Your Prince
12. A Prophecy Without Symbols
13. The Time of the End

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## Meet the Author of This Quarter's Lessons

Dr. G. Arthur Keough fits the appellation "a gentleman and a scholar"; he holds degrees from six colleges and universities. After completing requirements to receive his ministerial diploma and teacher certification in England, Dr. Keough traveled to the United States to attend Washington Missionary College and SDA Theological Seminary, where he completed a master's degree in church history. He earned degrees from the University of London and the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University, where he majored in Arabic language and Islamics.

Dr. Keough received recognition from the General Conference for fifty years of teaching. He founded and was president of Middle East College in Beirut, Lebanon, served as educational department secretary for the Middle East Union, was professor and chairman of the department of religion, Columbia Union College.

Besides teaching, Dr. Keough has written six books, four to accompany adult Sabbath School lessons, including *Insights from the Book of Daniel*. He also wrote teacher's aids for three other quarterlies.

Dr. Keough was born in Egypt to pioneer missionary parents, was ordained in Jerusalem, and resides with his wife, Dora Whiting, in Takoma Park, Maryland. The Keoughs have four grown children.

*Watch for information from your ABC for the companion study book by the lesson author.*

## Introduction to the Book of Daniel

# God and Our Destiny

Why is the book of Daniel so fascinating? For one thing, it tells us of Hebrew youth who remained loyal to God in spite of being taken into captivity. Their experiences offer insights into the way we should react when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances and are tempted to compromise our faith.

At the same time, the book is full of interesting dreams, visions, and interpretations. These outline the course and goal of history, the rise and fall of great empires, God's involvement in human affairs, how God's people may be oppressed, and yet how all things *do* work out for the best. When the Judge of the earth takes matters into His own hands truth will triumph and wickedness will be destroyed. If we want to know the destiny of the human race, if we want to know where we are in the stream of time, we must become acquainted with the prophecies of Daniel.

Ellen White has said: "Read the Book of Daniel. . . . The light that Daniel received from God was given especially for these last days. . . . These matters are of infinite importance."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 112-116.

With such encouragement, we begin our study of the book of Daniel. It is relevant to our times. It contains truths that we need to learn and apply to our lives.

### Overview of the Book of Daniel

Chapters 1-6	God's Messages to Literal Babylon	Chapters 7-12	God's Messages About Spiritual Babylon
1	Gospel portrayed in faithful witness	7	Daniel's first vision of nations and judgment
2	Nebuchadnezzar's dream	8	Daniel's second vision of nations and judgment
3	Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to change the future		
4	Nebuchadnezzar's conversion	9	Prayer for understanding and added explanation of second vision
5	Babylon judged		
6	Witness to Medo-Persia from Babylon	10-12	Daniel's third vision of nations and judgment

# How to Understand Prophecy

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** An overview of Bible prophecy.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God has not left the world or His people without warning and guidance. He has sent His prophets to warn of danger and to point out the true way. From the Bible we learn that God has been active in history. Indeed, He has been active in the life of every individual. We need to be grateful for His protection and His showers of blessing. But in a special sense in these last days, we can be grateful for the words and the writings of the prophets that warn of danger and point the way to eternal safety.

## LESSON OUTLINE:

- I. **The Principle of Prophecy: God keeps in touch.**
  1. An effective means of communication.
  2. Distinguishing the true from the false.
  3. The prophets were called from every walk of life.
- II. **The Prophetic Ministry: A gift of the Spirit.**
  1. Prophecy as preaching.
  2. Prophecy as prediction and evidence of inspiration.
- III. **Keys to Understanding Bible Prophecy:**
  1. Must recognize Christ at the center.
  2. Must recognize signs and symbols.
  3. Must recognize that some prophecies are conditional.

**INTRODUCTION:** By its very nature prophecy assumes that God can and does communicate with humanity. Naturally this concept is not popular with those who deny the existence of a personal God, nor is it acceptable to those who believe that God created the universe like a gigantic machine, then left it to run according to the principles He established at the beginning.

The Bible alone can give us a true record of how God has communicated with the people of this earth. It soon becomes evident that God has communicated in many ways and at various times through prophets, and supremely through the greatest of the prophets—His Son (Heb. 1:1-3). In fact, Christ is at the center of the prophetic revelations. We fail to understand prophecy if we do not see Jesus as the promised Messiah, the High Priest who offered Himself as a sacrifice, and the coming Judge and King.



SUN

**I. THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPHECY: GOD KEEPS IN TOUCH.**

Imagine what the world would be like if God made no attempt to keep in touch with those living on Planet Earth. If that were so, which of the following items would you miss most? Number them 1-5 in their order of importance to you:

- \_\_\_ You would have no Bible.
- \_\_\_ You would not know how the universe came into being.
- \_\_\_ You would not know why sin and suffering are in the world.
- \_\_\_ You would not know about the plan of salvation.
- \_\_\_ You would have no idea of what would happen in the future.

**1. An Effective Means of Communication.**

The Bible provides a record of how God has been in touch with the human race. He spoke face to face with our first parents in the Garden of Eden. But sin brought separation. (See Isa. 59:2.) This does not mean that the lines of communication are cut off; it only means that God has had to use intermediate agents. Because of sin human beings cannot at present see God and live. (See Ex. 33:20.)

One mark of God's love is that He continues to communicate with sinful beings. In His mercy He has given the human race one chance after another to repent and accept the plan of salvation. In His efforts to save the fallen race God continues to speak through the prophets to present His plans and purposes.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Do we appreciate as we ought what God has done for us? How can we show our appreciation in a tangible way?

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** God approaches men and women in the best way possible in order to present His message. After reading the following texts indicate below some of the methods God has used:

Gen. 19:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Gen. 37:5-11; 41:1-32 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 19:1, 2; Rom. 1:18, 19 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 1:1; Amos 3:7 \_\_\_\_\_

God has used other ways to reach people, but His supreme act of revelation and communication was in and through Jesus Christ. (See Heb. 1:2; John 14:9.) Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to assist us in the process of understanding God's communications. (See John 14:26; 16:13.) Through the Holy Spirit prophecy comes to life and takes on meaning. Because intelligence alone cannot reveal the hidden nuggets of spiritual truth, prayer is the essential method of beginning our study of Scripture.

MON

**2. Distinguishing the True From the False.**

We already have noted that sin is a barrier to communication. Sin made us enemies of God. (See Col. 1:21.) But that enmity has been taken away by the death of Christ on the cross. (See 2 Cor. 5:19.) However, the promptings of our

lower nature still get in the way of our taking full advantage of reading Scripture and profiting from the inspired writings of Ellen White. Some traits that cause people to be deaf to God's messages are: pride of intellect, pride in educational achievement, undue pride in family traditions and attachments, stubbornness in holding personal views and interpretations, and riches.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What other hindrances can you think of that keep you from understanding fully what God wishes to say?

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Another problem that faces the seeker after truth is that there are false prophets as well as true ones. How can we distinguish one from the other? As we all know, the counterfeit is so much like the original that even experts are deceived sometimes.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** After reading the following texts, indicate in the space provided below how the false can be differentiated from the true:

Deut. 13:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

Deut. 18:22; Jer. 28:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 7:15-20 \_\_\_\_\_

Because we live in a world where there are many conflicting claims as to the right way to interpret Bible prophecy we need the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to preserve us from deception. In order to be able to recognize error we need to be well grounded in truth.

**ILLUMINATION:** "Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 625.



### 3. The Prophets Were Called From Every Walk of Life.

Some of the prophets, like Isaiah and Daniel, were from the nobility. Others, like Jeremiah, were from the priesthood. Deborah was a judge. Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen when he was called.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Read the texts indicated below, then note the occupations and characteristics of some of those who were called to be prophets:

1. Noah (Gen 6:8, 9, 14, 22) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Abraham (Gen. 13:2-4; Heb. 7:4; 11:8-10) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Moses (Num. 12:3; Heb. 11:24-26) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Miriam (Ex. 15:20, 21) \_\_\_\_\_
5. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-6; 11:7-11) \_\_\_\_\_

The prophets and prophetesses were called to serve God in special circumstances. They were God's servants; they were His mouthpiece. Therefore their messages are important, carrying the authority of heaven. Jesus recognized that honor is due a prophet. (See Matt. 10:41.) When we recognize that the prophets spoke in the context of their times and culture we will not be surprised to find that the prophets used different languages and reflected their culture in their imagery. They would not be human if they did not do so. But they were passing on a message from God; they were speaking for God. We must read their messages with care, recognizing their origin.

**What is the significance of the term used to designate prophets in 1 Sam. 9:9?**

The use of this term served as a recognition that the prophet could see things that the ordinary person could not see. It was not a matter of natural ability; it was because they were in touch with the One who sees all things, and who can reveal what needs to be revealed. A Hebrew term for prophet was *Nabi*, that is, one who spoke under the inspiration of God. The Greek word from which we have derived our English word *prophet* means one who makes an announcement that is a revelation from God, or reveals that which is hidden in the sense that it cannot be proved by the reasoning processes, or predicts the future. In our study of the Book of Daniel we shall find that Daniel saw and heard things which have been written down for our learning.

**In view of what has been said about a prophet, why is it not possible for people themselves to choose to be genuine prophets? Jer. 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:10, 11.**

There are many occupations that a person can choose for himself, but being a prophet is not one of them. It is God who calls, God who gives the message, and God who sees to it that the message is delivered as He wants it delivered. With all this in mind we need to give the prophets our deepest respect and attention.



## **II. PROPHETIC MINISTRY: A GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Having looked at the prophet as a person and studied his characteristics, let us look at the way the prophet exercised his calling.

### **1. Prophecy as Preaching.**

Although we often think of prophecy in terms of prediction, the prophet did not always foretell future events. In fact, there were many prophets who, as far as we know, prophesied without predicting. God called Abraham a prophet. (See Gen. 20:7.) But we have no record of Abraham predicting the future. Such prophets prophesied in the sense that they spoke or witnessed to their generation. They spoke against the evil of their day, and urged that reforms be made.

Can you think of other prophets whose lives and messages were influential in their time, but who did not make predictions? Be prepared to discuss them as opportunity may arise in class discussion next Sabbath.

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## 2. Prophecy as Prediction and Evidence of Inspiration.

Divine prediction is not given in order to satisfy human curiosity regarding the future. When God, through the prophets, draws aside the curtains and allows human beings to peer into the future, He does so in order to create trust in Himself. He wants us to see that He is in control of events as they happen, and that His plans and purposes for the world are working out. Such control does not mean that God denies us freedom of choice or that He ordinarily intervenes; but it does mean that when human beings decide to harm one another or this planet they are limited by God's overall control.

God treats us as His children when He shares with us His understandings of the future. He invites us into the inner circle of those who are aware of what is going on in the world, so that we may share with Him His goals and objectives.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What other purposes may be served by predictive prophecy?

John 13:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 45:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 45:21, 22 \_\_\_\_\_

Dan. 2: 29, 47 \_\_\_\_\_

People usually want to know the future for selfish purposes. They want to know if they will win the battle or lose it; whether the time is propitious for some venture; what decisions will bring them the greatest returns. Unfortunately, these selfish purposes lead them to turn to the wrong sources of information. (See Deut. 18:10-12.)

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Of what modern counterparts to the heathen practices outlined in Deut. 18:10-12 are you aware?



## III. KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING BIBLE PROPHECY:

### 1. Must Recognize Christ at the Center.

What important predictive focus dominated the Old Testament? Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 23. What significance does this have to our present understanding of prophecy?

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One of Matthew's aims is to show that Jesus was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. He quotes from the Old Testament sixteen times.

Jesus Himself turned to the Old Testament to show how He had fulfilled the Messianic prophecies. (See Luke 24:25-27.) In fact, the main message of the Old Testament is that God will send a Deliverer who will save His people from their sins. (See 1 Pet. 1:10-12.) In our study of the Book of Daniel we shall see that prophecy clearly predicts the time of the coming of the Messiah and His work. Jesus as the Messiah is the center and core of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Our first endeavor when studying Bible prophecy should be to discover how the prophecy centers in Christ.

## **2. Must Recognize Signs and Symbols.**

In dealing with His people God uses signs and symbols to impress important truths upon the people. Thus, after the flood, He made a covenant that He would never destroy the world with a flood again. He set a rainbow in the sky as a sign or token of His promise (Gen. 9:12, 13). He said that the Sabbath was to be kept as a sign of sanctification—the symbol of a close relationship between Himself and His people. The entire sacrificial system was full of symbolism to show that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins. (See Heb. 9:22.) Miracles often were used as signs of God's power and the authenticity of His word. (See 2 Kings 20:1-11; Isa. 7:11-14.) Furthermore, God communicated with people through dreams in which symbols were used. (See Gen. 37:5-10.)

Thus we are not surprised to find dreams and miracles in Daniel. In fact, the miracles seemingly are as unforgettable to us as they must have been to those who observed them in actuality.

Symbols are remembered easily and serve as pictures that we can store in the mind and thus recall the lessons they teach. Remember how effective Jesus was as a teacher because He taught in parables. Prophetic symbols can be misapplied easily. One of the best ways to keep from doing so is to study carefully how the Bible writers and those who interpreted them in Bible days used and understood the symbols involved.

## **3. Must Recognize That Some Prophecies Are Conditional.**

God promised Israel that the chosen nation would become the center of a worldwide reformation, would be delivered from all enemies, and would become the center of the Messiah's kingdom. (See Isa. 2:10-21 and 4:2-6 for examples.) But because of Israel's failure to meet the conditions (see Deut. 28:15-68), God could not (and now never will be able to) fulfill the promises to them as a nation. (See Matt. 21:43.) "That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 713. The experience of Israel illustrates that "the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional" (Ellen G. White, quoted in the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 34).



**If some Bible prophecies are conditional upon human cooperation and obedience, how do we explain such Bible statements as James 1:17, Hebrews 13:8, and 1 Peter 1:25?**

“Eventually God's purposes will prevail and the plan of salvation will succeed, irrespective of the failure of any person or group. . . . The plan itself never changes because God never changes. But the manner in which it is carried out

may change because man may change. The fickle, human will is the weak, unstable factor in conditional prophecy. God may reject one nation or group of people in favor of another if those first summoned persistently refuse to cooperate with Him.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 34.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled “The Vineyard of the Lord,” in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 15-22.

**SUMMARY:** God communicates with His people through prophets because He loves His people and knows that they need His guidance. He has one desire, that all people be saved from their sins and welcomed into His kingdom. He uses many different ways to reach people because sin blinds human beings to His providences.

**APPLICATION:** As you continue to study the book of Daniel watch for special instruction from God that the Holy Spirit impresses on you. What reforms do you need to make in your life? What can you do to help others understand the important lessons you are learning?

**NOTES:**

# Judgment and Mercy

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 1.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We see the judgment of God in sending the people of Jerusalem into exile, but we also see the mercy of God in caring for those who are faithful to Him.

## OVERVIEW—God's Justice and Mercy

Justice	Mercy
1. Hezekiah's mistake 2. Manasseh's crimes 3. Josiah's reform	1. Royal favors 2. Success and tact 3. God's blessings
Our destiny is in our own hands	

**INTRODUCTION:** Daniel begins with the striking statement that it was God who decided the issue in the conflict between two nations.

Historians ordinarily do not make such statements. They look for other causes of victory and defeat. Was one side stronger than the other? Was there a strategy that won the day? Were there economic factors that extended their influence? Was there foul play or internal dissension? History deals with series of causes and consequences, but historians look for natural causes to explain the changes that have taken place.

Daniel states that in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, God decided to let Jerusalem fall into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. What happened was not a question of strength or strategy, weakness or failure; it was a matter of God's judgment. God decided that this should take place, and it did.

Here we face a theological problem. Does God have a hand in history? Does He decide the fate of nations? These are difficult questions to answer, but Daniel tells us that in the Babylonian victory which took place in 605 B.C., God was at work to assure that what took place was in harmony with His plans. (See also Hab. 1:5-9.)

Immediately the question arises: Why did God act this way? Is God arbitrary, or is He governed by laws and principles? If so, what are they? In this lesson we take a look at some historical background in order to attempt to see what principles are involved. Just as a parent must discipline a child, so God must make

clear to His people the principles of righteousness for which He stands. Sometimes the innocent suffer as a result of others' transgressions, but God makes it up to them by granting them special privileges and blessings. None of us have reason to complain about our lot. Instead, all of us have every reason to thank God for His providences.

SUN

## I. JUSTICE.

Abraham once asked the rhetorical question: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Of course God is just, but in this lesson we want to take a close look at His justice.

### 1. Hezekiah's Mistake (2 Kings 20).

Hezekiah was sick and about to die. Isaiah the prophet told him to set his house in order because death was imminent. Hezekiah prayed earnestly that his life might be spared, and it was.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Why did God tell Hezekiah that he was going to die (verse 1), and then give him an extension of fifteen years of life (verse 6)? Was it to teach us something? Was it to point out that we ought to accept God's providences and not seek to change them?

Whatever answers you give to these questions, it is interesting to note that the healing was confirmed by a sign that involved the sun—or, perhaps technically, the rotation of the earth. Apparently the Babylonian observers of this remarkable sign made inquiries and learned that what they had observed had to do with the healing of the King of Judah. A delegation came to make inquiries. (See verse 12.)

**Instead of giving God the glory for his marvelous healing, what did Hezekiah do? Verse 13. Why do you think he responded that way?**

God gives us opportunities to tell others of His providences. When we fail to do so, we are failing in accomplishing God's purposes in and through us. This is a serious failure, and we should pray that we never disappoint God in this way. Hezekiah received a strong rebuke through the prophet Isaiah. He was told that as a result of his action and inaction the time would come when the king of Judah would lose his wealth and influence. Some of Hezekiah's descendants would be taken captive to Babylon. Some would become "eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (verse 18).

This prediction was made nearly a hundred years before the actual exile and captivity. It demonstrates a relationship between what Hezekiah did and what actually happened. Every act has its consequences, for good or ill. Hezekiah had revealed his treasures of wealth but not the treasures of grace for which God was responsible and which were of greater worth than anything this world can offer.

MON

### 2. Manasseh's Crimes (2 Kings 21; 2 Chron. 33).

Hezekiah undoubtedly was relieved to know that, at least in his own time, there would be peace and security. Manasseh, his son, then took over the reins of government.



Manasseh began to reign as soon as he was considered old enough—twelve years of age. But Manasseh's father still was reigning. He would reign with his son for about ten years; part of the fifteen years that had been promised him (2 Kings 20:6). Hezekiah apparently appointed his son as co-regent as soon as he could do so legally, in order to give the young man training and experience for the task that soon would be his.

We are not told how Hezekiah tried to influence his son. But we are told that Manasseh followed a course of religious conduct that was different from the pattern set by his father. The list of his deeds is shocking. (See 2 Kings 21:2-9.)

**What lesson can you draw from the response of Manasseh and the people when God spoke to them about their evil ways? 2 Chron. 33:10.**

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There were some, however, who refused to be led into apostasy. It was these that Manasseh put to death and "filled Jerusalem from end to end" (2 Kings 21:16) with innocent blood.

**What can we expect God to do when confronted with such behavior? 2 Chron. 33:11. Why does God respond this way?**

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As a result of this drastic treatment Manasseh came to his senses and sought God's favor (verse 12). God was gracious and brought him back to Jerusalem. The Chronicler adds: "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God" (verse 13). Manasseh underwent a change of heart, but the evil he had done could not be erased. Through the prophets God repeated the prediction that the time would come when Jerusalem would suffer a terrible disaster. (See 2 Kings 21:13.) When the majority of the people and their leaders refuse to walk in the way of the Lord, there can be only one result. They will be left by God to suffer the natural consequences of rebellion.

Manasseh's son, Amon, proved to be even a worse ruler than his father. He never did show signs of repentance. The country was relieved when he was assassinated after a short reign of two years. (See 2 Chron. 33:21-24.)

**THINK IT THROUGH: What would you do if you were given power to deal with such uncooperative rulers and people? As you decide, do not overlook the words of Paul in Romans 2:1.**

### **3. Josiah's Reforms (2 Kings 22:1-23:26).**

As we trace briefly the history of the people of Jerusalem before the time of the captivity, we can conclude that God is not arbitrary in His dealings with wayward kings. Rather, He is gracious; willing to accept any sign of repentance.

**What made Josiah as king different from his immediate predecessors? 2 Kings 22:2.**

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Josiah set about repairing the temple. When a long lost book of the law was discovered and its contents read to the king, Josiah responded in consternation because he could see that he and the people were living in violation of the princi-

ples outlined. He gave orders that the priests should "inquire of the Lord" in order to find out what should be done (verse 13).

Josiah was succeeded by Jehoahaz who was described as one who "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 23:32). He was taken as a hostage to Egypt and died there. The next king, Jehoiakim, was equally evil. It is not surprising that the exile began in his days.

When people reach the point where they refuse to repent, there is nothing more God can do but let the consequences follow.

**What indicates that Daniel was acquainted with the history of his people and the kings whose experiences were outlined above? Dan. 1:1, 2.**

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## II. MERCY.

It is a characteristic of God that He combines justice with mercy. (See Ps. 85:10.) In our human situation we find it difficult to be merciful without in some way letting down justice; and in our demands for justice we forget the element of mercy. But God is both just and merciful without either attribute affecting the other.

### 1. Royal Favors.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** There can be no question about it being right that the wicked king Jehoiakim and those who joined in his rebelliousness against God's will should be taken into captivity. But how can the fact be explained that dedicated youths such as Daniel and his companions were also taken to Babylon?

As long as we are members of the same human family there is no escaping the fact that the righteous often suffer with the wicked. But our God is merciful. He makes compensation for unfortunate circumstances. None of us has any reason to complain about his or her "fate." Jesus suggested that those who are called upon to give up anything for the sake of the truth, will receive a hundredfold in this life and eternal life to come. (See Matt. 19:29.)

**How were Daniel and his companions shown favor when they were taken to Babylon? What does this indicate about God's purpose in their captivity? Dan. 1:3-5.**

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Many of the righteous among the captives from Jerusalem doubtless were confronted with difficult questions to answer. They probably agreed with Daniel that their captivity and exile fulfilled God's prediction. But they might well ask: Why should *we* have to suffer with the guilty?

More importantly they may have felt that, as a result of the outcome of the siege against Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar would consider his god, Marduk, greater than Yahweh. Why would God allow some of the vessels of the Temple to be taken to Babylon to be placed in a heathen shrine? Would this not cause the Babylonians to despise the Jews and their religion?

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Imagine yourself in their situation. How would you answer the questions indicated above?

One answer is that through people such as Daniel and his companions God would make sure that kings and their subjects would not long suffer any illusions about the true God and His great power. We shall see this in the lessons to come. God reveals Himself mainly through the faithfulness of His people.

**APPLICATION TO TODAY:** What do you think that we today can do to make sure our witness is what it should be?

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Nebuchadnezzar shrewdly decided to take as hostages some young men of talent from the elite of Jerusalem. His objective was to win their favor, win their allegiance to Babylon, in order to prepare them possibly to serve in the future as puppet rulers under his control. But God turned the shrewdness of the king into the means whereby the king and his empire would learn about the true God.

## 2. Success and Tact.

**Why were Daniel and his companions given the new names mentioned in Daniel 1:7?**

The new names were intended to help them forget the past and their allegiance to their religion so that they would adapt to their new situation. Whereas their old names incorporated the name of the true God, the new names incorporated the names of the Babylonian gods. No doubt the young men were aware of the policy of their captors. Should they oppose the use of these names or should they accept them? Apparently, seeing no reason why they should oppose the new names, they accepted and used them.

**What area was important enough for Daniel and his companions to make an issue out of? Dan. 1:8. Why was this area so significant?**

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The one great goal of the health reform message that has been given Seventh-day Adventists is not merely health for health's sake. The goal is sanctification—the restoration of human beings even in this life as far as possible to the physical, mental, social, and spiritual image of God. Daniel and his companions decided that they would put themselves on record as being on the Lord's side. In this respect there could be no compromise.

**ILLUMINATION:** “The sanctification set forth in the Sacred Scriptures has to do with the entire being—spirit, soul, and body. . . . True sanctification is an entire conformity to the will of God. Rebellious thoughts and feelings are overcome, and the voice of Jesus awakens a new life, which pervades the entire being. . . . Wherever they may be, those who are truly sanctified will elevate the moral standard by preserving correct physical habits, and, like Daniel, presenting to others an example of temperance and self-denial. . . . If we would be sanctified in soul, body, and spirit, we must live in conformity to the divine law.

The heart cannot preserve consecration to God while the appetites and passions are indulged at the expense of health and life.”—*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 7, 9, 29.

**According to the Bible, how is diet related to religious experience? Lev. 20:24-26; 1 Cor. 10:31.**

One lesson that can be drawn from Daniel’s experience is that, “In order to reach the highest standard of moral and intellectual attainments, it is necessary to seek wisdom and strength from God, and to observe strict temperance in all the habits of life.”—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 23.



**What did Daniel do to ensure that he and his companions would not defile themselves by the food from the royal table? Dan. 1:8-16.**

The tact that Daniel used in approaching the authorities on the matter of diet is commendable and exemplary. But God also had a hand in the matter. Note the words: “God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel” (verse 9, NIV).

Ashpenaz was sympathetic, but did not want to take the risk involved. Daniel then turned to his immediate tutor and arranged for a ten-day test of the vegetarian diet that they had requested. When, by God’s grace, the test was passed, the problem was resolved in their favor.

### **3. God’s Blessings.**

**What were the blessings that came to Daniel and his companions as a result of their decision to be true to religious principles? Dan. 1:17-21.**

Not only did the young men enjoy good health, but they also were good students. The Scripture says that it was God who gave them knowledge and understanding (verse 17). Intellect alone is not sufficient to guarantee success. Intelligence must be balanced by religious principle, and then God can reveal insights that may not be apparent to secular minds.

**What is included in the phrase “all learning and wisdom” in verse 17?**

Presumably it was the learning and wisdom of the Babylonians. Being allied with idolatry and pagan practices, it would be far different from the teachings of sacred writ. Anyone studying such philosophy without the blessing of God could be led astray. But with the blessing of God, Daniel and his companions were able to differentiate truth from error.

The young men passed their examinations with flying colors. They had taken one step in proving to the Babylonians that, although they had been defeated in battle, they were not behind the best in scholarship. It speaks well for the Babylonian king that he promoted them to positions of honor in spite of their being foreign captives. God was with them, and God would use them to teach the Babylonians lessons that they needed to learn.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read one, if not all, of the following from *Prophets and Kings*: The chapter entitled “The Ambassadors from Babylon,” pages 340-348; the chapter entitled “Manasseh and Josiah,” pages 381-406; the chapter entitled “Carried Captive Into Babylon,” pages 452-463.

“In the experience of Daniel and his companions we have an instance of the triumph of principle over temptation to indulge the appetite. . . .

“What if Daniel and his companions had made a compromise with those heathen officers and had yielded to the pressure of the occasion by eating and drinking as was customary with the Babylonians? That single instance of departure from principle would have weakened their sense of right and their abhorrence of wrong. Indulgence of appetite would have involved the sacrifice of physical vigor, clearness of intellect, and spiritual power. One wrong step would probably have led to others, until, their connection with Heaven being severed, they would have been swept away by temptation.”—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 23.

**SUMMARY:** The exile was inevitable in view of the fact that the people of Judah insisted on doing what they knew to be wrong. God cannot but be just. Yet God was long-suffering, not anxious to punish, and always open to genuine repentance. At the same time God was unwavering in His plan that the heathen nations should come to know the true God. If this could not be done through a faithful people in Jerusalem, then it would have to be done through a faithful few in the courts of Babylon.

**APPLICATION:** What can we learn from the sad story of the failure of the people of Jerusalem to do what is right? How is the story different in the case of Daniel and his three friends? What does this tell us about our circumstances? How does it affect our determination to witness?

**NOTES:**

# Revealer of Mysteries

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 2.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?" (Deut. 3:24).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** At some time or another most of us become concerned about the future. Sometimes our concerns are legitimate; often they are not. This week's lesson points out that there is only One who knows the future, who can reveal it, and who *is* the future.

OVERVIEW—Daniel 2		
The Dream	The Interpretation	The Response
The troubled king— vs. 1	A wise Daniel— vss. 14-16	The king's confession— vss. 46, 47
Helpless counselors— vss. 2-11	The source of help— vss. 17, 18	Daniel honored— vss. 48, 49
A hasty decree— vss. 12, 13	The dream revealed— vss. 24-45	

**INTRODUCTION:** After two or three years of successful rulership Nebuchadnezzar, no doubt, felt pleased with himself. By swift and astute action he had managed to secure the throne for himself and foiled those enemies who may have had other plans. In conflict with the Assyrian powers he had gained the victory. He had put the Egyptian forces to rout. Now he felt secure on his throne. He had settled the affairs in Judah so that he expected no trouble from that quarter. His scheme of having hostages at his court, with his enlightened policy of showing them favor, made him feel capable of handling any situation. Young, strong, and intelligent, he felt that he had everything under control.

Yet, not everything. He was well aware of the snares along life's pathway. He knew how others invested with great power had been overthrown. Could he indeed, establish a dynasty that would not be overthrown? How would he secure guarantees?

With such thoughts running through his mind Nebuchadnezzar tossed about in his bed. Then he dreamed a dream that seemed to raise more questions. It startled him into wakefulness. He was deeply troubled about the dream but could not recall it. It was a dream that he could not ignore. He *must* find out what it meant.

SUN

**I. THE DREAM (Dan. 2:1-13).**

This is not the first time in Scripture that we find an important person having a dream and being concerned about it. A Pharaoh in Egypt had two dreams that were so much alike that it seemed obvious that they both carried a significant message. With God's help, Joseph gave Pharaoh the interpretation. This divine guidance made it possible for the king to know what to do for the best interests of his people, and, as it turned out, for the children of Israel as well (Gen. 41:14-45).

**1. The Troubled King (Dan. 2:1).**

**What does the fact that God communicated with a pagan king as well as with a dedicated prophet through a dream tell us about God? Rom 2:11; Gal. 3:28.**

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God intended that His people would be His emissaries, His missionaries to the rest of the world. Unfortunately, they did not live up to their responsibilities, and now we see God pursuing His objectives through the Babylonian exile. God turns tragedies into opportunities. Idolatry led to the exile. But those who later returned from the exile generally forsook idolatry.

**2. Helpless Counselors (Dan. 2:2-11).**

**Why was the source that Nebuchadnezzar turned to for help not able to give him the assistance he wished? Dan. 2:2, 27, 28.**

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Determined to find out about the dream, the king consulted the only source of information he thought was available—the religious elite and leaders of his day. But there was one problem: the king had forgotten his dream!

**How did the so-called skilled interpreters of dreams try to get out of what they considered an impossible situation? Dan. 2:10.**

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Note the statements made that later were contradicted in the king's experience:

1. "There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter." Daniel was able by God's help to solve the king's problem.

2. "There is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Nebuchadnezzar was to learn that there is a God who can reveal secrets and that He does communicate with human beings.

The reaction of the king was typical of potentates who are not used to being thwarted. It does not come as a surprise that Nebuchadnezzar should act this way. The question is: Was the king unreasonable in his request, as his learned counselors tried to suggest?

Nebuchadnezzar had every right to expect that those who claimed to interpret dreams by means of connection with their gods could by the same connection find out what the dream was.

God brought the pagan king to a place where he would recognize the superiority of another God, the God of Daniel. The scenario that followed showed the powerlessness of the heathen gods and brought prominence to the true God.

MON

### 3. A Hasty Decree (Dan. 2:12, 13).

One question immediately arises: Where was Daniel at this time? How was it that he and his companions were not at the court with the rest of the learned elite?

A number of suggestions have been made:

1. This situation arose before Daniel had graduated from his school. But the fact that Daniel was to be slain with the others, suggests that he was a full member of the group.

2. Those responsible for issuing the kings' summons purposely left Daniel and his companions out of the reckoning. The summons was not delivered because of the jealousy of the other counselors. They wanted to use the occasion for their own benefit. If this were their scheme and motive they certainly did not deserve any mercy, certainly not from the "captives." However, Daniel showed an exemplary spirit by contrast, in that he was anxious to save the lives of his fellow counselors.

3. Daniel and his companions may have been engaged in a regular prayer or worship service that the Babylonians did not want to interrupt.

Whatever may have been the reason, it is obvious that it was providential. In this way the inability of the heathen counselors to accede to the king's request was made more noticeable.

## II. THE INTERPRETATION. (Dan. 2:14-45).

In this case the interpretation became more acceptable and credible because of the miracle of discovery of what the dream had been.

### 1. A Wise Daniel (Dan. 2:14-16).

Daniel's tact was evident in the way he helped solve the question over the Hebrew youths' diet. In this chapter we see how wise he is as he goes about finding the solution to an even greater problem.

**THINK IT THROUGH: What can we learn from the way Daniel sought to solve his problem?**

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Speaking with tact and wisdom to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, Daniel wanted to know why the king's decree was so "hasty," so "urgent." Because the word originally used in this passage is found only here in Scripture, its meaning is not absolutely certain. The NIV translates it as "harsh." It does not suggest criticism, although it does imply surprise. Recognizing that it was a reasonable question, Arioch gave Daniel the details of what happened that day (verse 15).

Apparently Daniel asked for an interview with the king and it was granted. Nebuchadnezzar, knowing that he could not get an answer from the Babylonian elite, probably was willing to try any source. Daniel assured him that it was possible to find help, but he would need time to do so. Daniel then shared his problem with his companions. It always helps to seek counsel from those of like faith. Naturally, they prayed together for God's help.



**What two burdens characterized the prayer mentioned in Daniel 2:18?**

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Did Daniel and his companions go to bed with the assurance that their prayers would be answered? We are not told, but the prayers were answered. Although the vision came directly to Daniel, Daniel included his companions as having received the answer to their prayers (verse 23).

**How did Daniel immediately respond? What would you consider to be some of the key phrases in Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving? Dan. 2:19-23.**

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## **2. The Source of Help (Dan. 2:17, 18).**

When facing a problem we must not ignore the means that God has placed at our disposal, such as common sense. For problems that require knowledge and technical skill we rightly turn for help to experts in the field of concern. But there is one means that we should never forget: prayer to our Heavenly Father for His blessing and guidance. Furthermore, we should never forget the principles of living that God outlines in His Word.

Unfortunately, many today turn to sources that cannot guide them aright, such as horoscopes, or crystal gazers, palmists, and spiritualistic seances. Sometimes they even depend on the toss of a coin to help them decide issues.

**What specific warning is given to Christians about turning to the occult for advice? See Isa. 8:19, 20.**

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**What does Psalm 121 tell us about the source to which we should turn when we need assurance?**

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The psalmist thinks of the hills as symbolizing power, stability, and strength. But he soon turned for help to the One who created the hills.

Daniel and his companions learned that God was ever near them, even in exile. Whatever they needed God could and did supply. Who is it that makes changes in life's circumstances? It is God Himself. Who is it that is responsible for political changes? It is God who sets up and puts down kingdoms. This suggests that purely human maneuverings without God's permission or control can never succeed. We cannot understand history or grasp human circumstances if we ignore God's participation.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Can we enter into the same kind of calm confidence that we see in Daniel and his companions in exile? Can we share their sense of mission as we see them fulfilling their responsibilities in the political life of Babylon? They were not alone. God was with them and blessed them. Therefore they blessed the God of their fathers.

WED

**3. The Dream Revealed (Dan. 2:24-45).**

We can pray, but we cannot decide for God when and how our prayers should be answered. True prayer is not trying to force our will on God. It is letting Him know what we perceive as our needs. As children ask their parents for things that they think they need, so we as Christians can approach the throne of grace and present our requests. But we must leave it to God to decide when and what to give. In the case of Daniel and his companions the answer came immediately. In some cases answers come before we ask. (See Isa. 65:24.) In all cases, they come according to God's will and what He knows is best for us.

**How is human nature demonstrated in Arioch's claim to have "found" Daniel? Dan. 2:25.**

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Arioch showed a very human trait, that of claiming all the credit possible to oneself. The fact is that Arioch had not "found" Daniel; Daniel had come to him first.

**How did Daniel respond to the king's inquiry as to whether he knew the dream and its interpretation? Dan. 2:26, 27.**

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In contrast to Arioch's self-serving claim, Daniel made it clear that he could not give the answer on the basis of his own knowledge. In fact, no human being could in his or her own power answer the king's request.

*"But there is a God in heaven"* (verse 28). Here is the clue; God is the true source of knowledge. He is different from the gods whom the Babylonians worshiped. He is not the God of the Jews only. He is the God of the universe, the only One and true God.

*"That revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king . . . what shall be in the latter days"* (verse 28). Although God in heaven alone knows everything, He communicates with people on earth. He opens up the future so that we may know how things will end. There is a goal toward which things move under His direction.

King Nebuchadnezzar hardly could miss the lesson. The Babylonians worshiped false gods. The priests who claimed to get answers from their gods were not in touch with reality. Nebuchadnezzar had a perfect right to doubt the entire system. But to expect the impossible from such a system was unfair.

**NOTES:**



STUDY thoughtfully Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation. Dan. 2:31-43.

The Bible tells us who was represented by the head of gold—Babylon. List the kingdoms that followed as you have gained insight into them from your personal study of history and prophecy.

Arms and breast of silver \_\_\_\_\_

Belly and thighs of brass \_\_\_\_\_

Legs of iron \_\_\_\_\_

Feet of iron mixed with clay \_\_\_\_\_

**What is represented by the decending order of value in the composition of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream?**

"Babylon, shattered and broken at last, passed away because in its prosperity its rulers had regarded themselves as independent of God, and had ascribed the glory of their kingdom to human achievement. The Medo-Persian realm was visited by the wrath of Heaven because in it God's law had been trampled under foot. The fear of the Lord had found no place in the hearts of the vast majority of the people. Wickedness, blasphemy, and corruption prevailed. The kingdoms that followed were even more base and corrupt; and these sank lower and still lower in the scale of moral worth."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 501, 502.

Newspapers recount the terrible condition that the world is in today. In such a world the church is to be an island of righteousness. Not that the church is perfect, for there is nothing perfect in this world. But the church is the center of God's activity, where sinners are turned to saints by God's grace, and through which the gospel is being preached to the world. Each of us should have a part in accomplishing God's plans and purposes.

**Explain what is meant by the stone cut out without hands and the destruction of the image. Verses 35, 44, 45.**

Only one kingdom will last forever. That is the kingdom that God will set up at the second coming of Christ. The world may be getting worse and worse, but there is a coming climax. God will take over and put an end to sin. He will take over completely, for His kingdom will "fill the whole earth" (verse 35). Although the Messiah was not introduced specifically to King Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Christ was pointed out as being God's ultimate answer to halting the march of sin in this world. Every time we study Bible prophecy, we should make an earnest attempt to learn how Christ forms the center of each prophecy.

**ILLUMINATION:** "Let Daniel speak, let the Revelation speak, and tell what is truth. But whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 118.



### III. THE RESPONSE (Dan. 2:46-49).

#### 1. The King's Confession (Dan. 2:46, 47).

What was the king's reaction when he understood the dream and its implications? Verses 46, 47.

The king responded in the way that any heathen king would do; he paid Daniel the highest respect. It is doubtful that he worshiped Daniel as a person. Rather, he worshiped the One whom Daniel represented. His confession was a significant one, recognizing that the God of Daniel was a "God of gods." Nebuchadnezzar was taking a giant step towards becoming a child of God.

#### 2. Daniel Honored (Verses 48, 49).

The Babylonian king followed up his new understanding of God with high promotions for Daniel. When we remember that Daniel was a captive from Judah, we can see that Nebuchadnezzar recognized worth without regard to race or status. When Daniel asked that his companions be given positions of responsibility too, the king did not hesitate. Thus those who were faithful among the exiles received honor and glory.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled "Nebuchadnezzar's Dream" in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 491-502.

**SUMMARY:** Through the experience recorded in chapter 2, Daniel learned anew that God is good, and King Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is great. It is not where we are or what happens to us, but the way that we relate to God's providences that matters. In all experiences we can glorify God. One day we shall have every reason to rejoice as we look back on the way that God has led us.

**APPLICATION:** Be prepared to give testimony to those about you of God's goodness to you. Then on Sabbath share with your class members what the results were of giving such testimony.

**NOTES:**

# Able to the Uttermost

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 3.



**MEMORY TEXT:** “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** How far should we go in obedience to God's commands? Should we go as far as accepting death as the inevitable consequence? By refusing to bow down to the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, the Hebrew youth were ready to sacrifice their lives. But God honored their stand and protected them.

Dan. 3—The Great Controversy in Ancient Babylon	
Evil at Work	God at Work
Attempt to thwart God's revealed purpose—vss. 1-12 The faithful sentenced to death vss. 19-23	A faithful few refuse to bow to pressure—vss. 13-18 The witness of deliverance vss. 24-27
Response to the witness of deliverance—vss. 28-30	

**INTRODUCTION:** In this lesson we note the arrogance of a king who thought he could change history to make it go his way. He failed, of course. Because of his failure to recognize the power of personal conviction, Nebuchadnezzar found himself in a difficult position for an authority figure. A wiser man would have realized the limitations of his power. Behind the events we study this week we can see God setting the stage for the largest number of people to witness His power. Three men took a very lonely stand. The pressure on them to conform was great. The consequence of disobedience to the king was awesome. But they stood firm. What gave them the power to resist evil?

The evidence of God's power was overwhelming. But it took God's grace for Nebuchadnezzar to be willing to face the evidence. The heathen king was honest enough to acknowledge God's power, although he later fell victim to pride again and subsequently sought to regulate worship by decree. As we study the lesson, let us ask ourselves: what would we do if we were in similar circumstances? We may be sure that God's grace will be sufficient for us as long as we are determined to do right.



## I. THE TEST (Dan. 3:1-18).

The forces of good and the forces of evil stand in conflict in this world. It is important for us to recognize these forces, and to choose to be on God's side.

### 1. Attempt to Thwart God's Revealed Purpose (Dan. 3:1-12).

It seems ridiculous for human beings to think that they can oppose the power of God. Yet this happens often. We see it in the case of Nebuchadnezzar. We see how opposition arises out of selfish interest.

**What was the significance of the image that Nebuchadnezzar erected on the plain of Dura near Babylon? Dan. 3:1-3.**

It is almost impossible not to see a link between the image that was set up in Dura and the image the king had seen in his dream. But there was one significant difference; whereas the image in the dream had been composed of various metals, the image set up in the plain was made of one metal—gold. When interpreting the dream Daniel had said that the head of gold represented King Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty. It had also been pointed out that another kingdom would succeed Babylon, a kingdom inferior, but nevertheless a different kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar accepted the interpretation of the dream as a supernatural revelation. He recognized the God of Daniel as the great Revealer of secrets. But the concept that another kingdom would succeed his did not please him.

There was nothing secret or hidden about the happenings surrounding the dream and its interpretation. For one thing, all the scholars in Babylon owed their lives to Daniel and certainly would have been told about his revelation of the dream and its meaning to the king. The promotion of Daniel to high office in the land provided abundant evidence that the king had received an answer to his request.

**ILLUMINATION:** "For a time afterward [after the dream], Nebuchadnezzar was influenced by the fear of God; but his heart was not yet cleansed from worldly ambition and a desire for self-exaltation. The prosperity attending his reign filled him with pride. In time he ceased to honor God, and resumed his idol worship with increased zeal and bigotry. . . . The wise men of his realm, taking advantage of this and of his return to idolatry, proposed that he make an image similar to the one seen in his dream, and set it up where all might behold the head of gold, which had been interpreted as representing his kingdom.

"Pleased with the flattering suggestion, he determined to carry it out, and to go even farther. Instead of reproducing the image as he had seen it, he would excel the original. His image should not deteriorate in value from the head to the feet, but should be entirely of gold—symbolic throughout of Babylon as an eternal, indestructible, all-powerful kingdom, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms and stand forever."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 504.

**What three things did the king seem to forget?**

1. The remarkable circumstances surrounding the dream that compelled him to seek an interpretation.

2. The failure of the Babylonian elite to come forward with a solution and the remarkable answer that had come through Daniel as evidence of the one true God.
3. That it was not he but God who determines the future. Somehow, he thought he could pattern history after his own desires.



**Who were invited by the king to come to the plain of Dura in order to see the great image, and why do you think they were invited? Daniel 3:2, 3.**

The king of Babylon seems to have invited everyone of consequence in his dominion (except for Daniel, who was absent for some unknown reason) to come to see the image. It was to be an occasion when everyone would see the might and power of the Neo-Babylonian empire symbolized.

The prophet Jeremiah says that Zedekiah, King of Judah, went to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. (See Jer. 51:59.) It is possible that this was in response to Nebuchadnezzar's summons. Daniel does not date the events he narrates in the third chapter. If we can link Zedekiah's trip with Daniel 3 we arrive at the date of 594/593 B.C. as the historic occasion when the dignitaries in the Babylonian empire were called upon to recognize the greatness and might of Babylon.

**ILLUMINATION:** "On that eventful day the powers of darkness seemed to be gaining a signal triumph; the worship of the golden image bade fair to become connected permanently with the established forms of idolatry recognized as the state religion of the land. Satan hoped thereby to defeat God's purpose of making the presence of captive Israel in Babylon a means of blessing to all the nations of heathendom."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 506.

We must not minimize the pressure that can be applied on us from outside sources. Peer and other pressures are not easy to resist. It is not easy to stand for the truth though the heavens fall. We need to pray humbly that God will give us grace sufficient for the day, so that we can do what is right regardless of the circumstances. Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 10:12 is well taken.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** **If you were to find yourself in the situation that the young Hebrews did, demanding participation in a false form of worship, what kinds of questions would you ask yourself?**

*Here are some suggestions:*

1. Our fellow Hebrews are not taking the same stand as we; can we be sure that we are not fanatics?
2. Is it right to jeopardize our lives for a very simple act? Everyone knows that we do not worship idols; could we not conform outwardly while making inward mental reservations?
3. Is it right to give up our lives over this little matter? Would God hold it against us if we bowed down "just this once"?
4. Which is better, to die for truth, or to avoid crises and live to continue our witness?

How would *you* answer these questions? When we are in a particular crisis it is not easy to take an unpopular and lonely stand. God's grace alone can enable

us to do what is right in every situation. We cannot afford to judge those who have not taken the same stand we have. It is easy to be wise after the event. Our only safeguard is to make a firm decision in times of peace to do what is right by God's grace in times of crisis.

There is another important truth that we learn from the events that took place on the Plain of Dura. Truth was not with the majority. We must know the truth for ourselves, and not be carried away by the crowd. This means that we must study thoroughly what we believe. We cannot just accept the word of someone else; not even that of the pastor, or a parent. Crises in our lives are inevitable, and crises as we approach the end of the world will not be easy ones to face.



**THINK IT THROUGH: What elements are essential in preparing young people to be staunch for the truth?**

Consider some of the following influences and evaluate them:

1. Religion in the home.
2. The church school.
3. Academy, college, and university.
4. Sabbath School and church service.
5. Holding an office in the church and witnessing.
6. Choosing one's associates and life partner.
7. The consistent witness of church leaders.
8. Personal in-depth study of the Word of God.

It is important to remember that while we are influenced in a strong way by our environment and our heredity, there is another powerful factor for good in the world that never is far from us—the grace of God and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Each of us possesses inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil, but our lives need not be dominated by sin. God has provided the victory through Christ.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Can you imagine three people standing boldly upright while a large crowd of distinguished people bow down before a great image? Have you even been in a crowd and felt as though you were standing out like a sore thumb? Would you feel like hiding yourself? On the other hand, have you had to stand for truth, and afterwards were glad that you were able to do it?

**It does not take long for news to spread about nonconformity. Who reported the Hebrews to the king, and why do you think they did so? Dan. 3:8-12.**

The very wise men whose lives had been spared by the providential presence of the Hebrew captives in Babylon now brought an accusation against the three Hebrews. How soon they had forgotten the benefits they had received and the lesson they had learned about the God who revealed secrets, who alone deserved worship!

But such is life, and we must not be surprised if our closest friends, and those who should know better, are the ones who spread unfair reports about us and cause us trouble. (See Matt. 10:36.) But in all this we must learn to behave with propriety and confront with tact those who oppose us.

The Hebrew youth not only were accused of refusing to worship the image.



They also were accused of ingratitude and rebellion. No wonder the king was furious! In fact it was suggested that the king had misjudged character when he had appointed these men to high office (verse 12).

## 2. A Faithful Few Refuse to Bow to Pressure (Dan. 3:13-18).

This was not the best time to disobey the king. “Flushed with triumph” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 506) he was enjoying success and adulation. But because he prided himself on being a fair king he gave the Hebrew youth a second chance to obey his order. He said that he was willing to overlook their earlier disobedience if they would now conform. But then he went on to threaten them with instant death in the fiery furnace, adding, “What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (Dan. 3:15, NIV).

The three youth were now being challenged. They reminded the king that they had discussed the issues and did not need to go over those matters again. They knew that God could save them, even from a fiery furnace. Even if He did not, they would be loyal to Him.



## II. THE DELIVERANCE (Dan. 3:19-27).

### The Faithful Sentenced to Death—Verses 19-23.

**What do you think about the way the furious king responded to what he perceived as defiance? See Verses 19, 20.**

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Nebuchadnezzar decided to proceed with his plan, with only one change—the furnace would be seven times hotter! He was going to make sure that the test of the power of the Hebrew’s God not only would be valid, but also would be indisputable.

Before the entire multitude the king exercised his authority in such a way that there would be no doubt left in anyone’s mind about who was in charge. Discipline sometimes demands a show of force. The strongest men were brought to execute the sentence. The three defiant Hebrews were bound with all their clothes, so that not a thing would remain of them or their belongings. Then they were thrown into the furnace. It was a bit disconcerting that the men who had thrown the Hebrews into the furnace were killed by the terrible heat.

You know the story well. But it remains a favorite and is repeated again and again, because in it we see physical strength set at naught, political power helpless, and the God of righteousness vindicated. Can you think of anything more exciting? The point is that that power exercised on the Plain of Dura is a power that is available to us today.

**Why was King Nebuchadnezzar so alarmed as he looked into the fiery furnace? Daniel 3:24, 25.**

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The king no doubt was surprised to see the three Hebrews walking in the furnace apparently unharmed. But what frightened him was the appearance of the fourth. Only three had been thrown in; why was there a fourth? And the fourth was like a “son of the gods” (verse 25, NIV). Here the king found himself

in the presence of a power the like of which he had never experienced before. He forgot the multitude. He forgot the image. He forgot his power as king. He was confronted with a miraculous act of God. In great humility he cried out: "Servants of the Most High God, come out!" (Daniel 3:26, NIV).

**How did Nebuchadnezzar recognize the fourth presence in the fire as the Son of God? How would he know anything about God's Son?**

"The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 509.



### III. RESPONSE TO THE WITNESS OF DELIVERANCE (Dan. 3:28-30).

Admittedly King Nebuchadnezzar, with all his faults and weaknesses, was at least honest. When the evidence was clear he accepted it. This is not always true of everyone. Some will continue to deny the truth even when the strongest evidence is presented. It is the grace of God alone that enables us to see the truth and accept it.


**What is the significance of the king's reaction when he saw that no harm had come to the Hebrew youth as a result of the fire? Dan. 3:28-30.**

Nebuchadnezzar was well within his rights to bless God for what he had seen and heard. For him to call God the God of the three Hebrew youth was perfectly proper, and God would not be ashamed to be called their God. But Nebuchadnezzar's personal conversion was not yet complete. He still had to accept the King of heaven as his personal God.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What about us? Are our lives such that God would be happy to be referred to as *our* God? It is our privilege to have such a relationship with Him that we think of Him as *our* God. Paul often referred to Him as "my God." (See Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 4:19.) So did Daniel. (See Daniel 6:22.) Thomas said, "My Lord and my God," when all his doubts had been taken away (John 20:28).

**ILLUMINATION:** "It was right for the king to make public confession, and to seek to exalt the God of heaven above all other gods; but in endeavoring to force his subjects to make a similar confession of faith and to show similar reverence, Nebuchadnezzar was exceeding his right as a temporal sovereign. He had no more right, either civil or moral, to threaten men with death for not worshiping God, than he had to make the decree consigning to the flames all who refused to worship the golden image. God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 510, 511.

The king promoted the three Hebrew youth, thus giving practical expression to the lessons he had learned from them. As an autocratic king he was able to do so, but quite apart from his ability it was an appropriate gesture of gratitude. It was a public testimony of his faith in the God of the captives. Not everyone is ready to take the risk of a public testimony, but when it is given, its results are felt in an ever-widening circle.

 **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled “The Fiery Furnace” in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 503-513.

Consider the present significance of the experience in Daniel 3 in the light of the following comment: “By many, the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is made void, being treated as a thing of naught; while the spurious sabbath, the child of the papacy, is exalted. In the place of God’s laws are elevated the laws of the man of sin—laws that are to be received and regarded as the wonderful golden image of Nebuchadnezzar was by the Babylonians. Forming this great image, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that it should receive universal homage from all, both great and small, high and low, rich and poor.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 4, p. 1169.

**SUMMARY:** Although God may not always intervene to save His followers from martyrdom, the experience of Daniel 3 demonstrates that God can save His people from apparently fatal circumstances. More importantly, it demonstrates that He is able to save us from the inroads of sin.

**APPLICATION:** We make progress by taking one step at a time. None of us reaches Christian maturity at one leap. Blessed is the person who has the grace and the will to do what is right and accepts the light of truth as it is presented. But more importantly, as time goes on, Christians will be called upon to witness for their faith in circumstances comparable to those of the Hebrew captives in Babylon. We may be sure that the God who worked mightily on behalf of those who were faithful to Him, will always do what is best for those who would choose to die rather than to disobey or disown their God and Saviour Jesus Christ. “Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God’s saints.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 513.

**NOTES:**

# The High Price of Pride

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 4.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psalm 19:13).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Reviewing the many projects he had accomplished, Nebuchadnezzar felt that he had succeeded well. He forgot that it was God who had given him all he had. In his pride he exalted himself rather than God. For his own sake and for the sake of those who would come after him he was given a lesson that he would never forget, a lesson that pride exacts a price too high to pay.

<b>Daniel 4: A Royal Proclamation</b>	
<b>Pride</b>	
A royal confession—vss. 1-3 The wise men fail again—vss. 4-7 Daniel to the rescue—vs. 8 The dream—vss. 9-18	The interpretation—vss. 19-27 Prediction fulfilled—vss. 28-30 Judgment pronounced—vss. 31-33 Converted by adversity—vss. 34-37
<b>Humility</b>	

**INTRODUCTION:** Chapter four is different from any other chapter in the book of Daniel in that it takes the form of a proclamation made by King Nebuchadnezzar. It was addressed to people everywhere, regardless of race, political alignment, or language. The king wanted everyone to know about his experience with the God of heaven.

As a proclamation it may seem to be out of keeping with the rest of the book, but actually fits into it well. All of the people concerned have been mentioned before: the King of Babylon, the professional diviners, and Daniel. Furthermore, there is a dream which gives the king great concern; an attempt to find a suitable interpretation of the dream; and, finally, Daniel is found to give the interpretation.

This is the last time that Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned as having a part in the events of his day. The king who was introduced to us as the one into whose hands Jehoiakim, King of Judah, was placed by God, now makes his exit from Daniel's account. It is a most unusual story, authenticated by the king himself in his public proclamation.

The story has a happy ending. Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson. He had

learned that the God of the Jewish captives was a revealer of secrets. He had learned that the God of heaven had power to save His faithful worshipers from the flames of a furnace. Now he was to learn that there are Watchers in heaven, Watchers who intervene providentially for the good of every individual in order that there will be no misunderstanding as to the source of wisdom and strength, health and success, life and eternal well-being. Ellen White tells us that "the once proud monarch had become a humble child of God" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 521) as a result of this experience.



## I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CONFESSION (Dan. 4:1-3).

There is an element of truth in the oft-repeated statement that history repeats itself. But the fact is that nothing is repeated in exactly the same way. In our lesson today there are elements similar to the account in Daniel 2, but there are significant differences, too. People may make the same mistake again and again, but it is to be hoped that eventually they will learn by their mistakes and thus reach the point where wisdom will take the place of foolishness.

**What did King Nebuchadnezzar indicate his purpose to be in the introduction to his proclamation? Dan. 4:1-3.**

King Nebuchadnezzar wanted everyone to know about his experience. He must have felt that it was important for others to understand the truths he finally had come to appreciate.

"*May you prosper greatly!*" (Daniel 4:1). How often we open our letters with a phrase much like this. Our desire for other people is that they may enjoy the blessings of God. More important than their enjoying material wealth and physical health is their coming to enjoy spiritual health. Note Paul's desire for his readers in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. It is important to be ready for the second coming of Jesus.

"*It is my pleasure to tell you*" (Dan. 4:2, NIV). It always is a pleasure to convey good news. It also is a pleasure to testify to God's goodness in our lives. If we were to spend more time telling others about God's providences to us, rather than recounting our aches and pains, our struggles and disappointments, we would find ourselves happier and be the means of bringing happiness to others.

"*How great are his signs*" (Daniel 4:3). The greatness of God is proclaimed in the Muslim world from thousands of minarets every day. Here we read of a heathen king who testifies to the greatness of God. Should not Christians be even more forward in proclaiming the greatness of God?

**THINK IT THROUGH: Nebuchadnezzar recognized the greatness of God's signs and wonders. One of God's greatest signs is His providences seen in the affairs of human beings. His wonders are expressed in the miracles by which He shows that He is in control of nature and the onward course of history. Can you give some examples of signs and wonders related to your own experience?**

Nebuchadnezzar goes on to speak of God's kingdom. Great king as he was, he knew that God was in control. Not in the sense that He made puppets of men and

women, but in the sense that He makes known His will, and points up the consequences of evil. He works for the salvation of all, although all will not be saved.

Furthermore, God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall; great leaders come and go. But God's purpose is that He will have a kingdom in which only peace and righteousness will reign. It takes time and patience to set up such a kingdom, particularly when men and women are given freedom of choice. But the achievement of the goal is not in doubt. And, humanly speaking, God has a lot of time and a lot of patience.



## II. NEBUCHADNEZZAR CORRUPTED BY PRIDE (Dan. 4:4-30).

### 1. The Wise Men Fail Again (Verses 4-7).

In the light of their past failures it is surprising that Nebuchadnezzar should turn to his learned counselors once again to seek an interpretation of his dream. But perhaps it was providential because there was an important difference this time; the king remembered his dream and needed only an interpretation. It would now be seen that the so-called diviners were helpless to give an explanation even when the dream was recounted.

**Why were the diviners unable to give the king the interpretation that he needed? Why did they not just make up some interpretation?**

It is quite possible that the Babylonian diviners saw in the dream an evil omen that they were afraid to mention to the king. Because they were timeservers, anxious not to lose their jobs, they thought it was wise to be silent.

The king did not become furious at their failure at this time. It is possible that he had learned that he could not depend on them to interpret any dream.

**Why does God ordinarily not reveal details about the future to us?**

The fact that the future is mainly hidden from our view is providential. If we knew some of the things that would come to us we would be discouraged from the start. God does not reveal the future merely to satisfy idle curiosity. It is sufficient for us that He has revealed the main things that are to take place in the conflict between good and evil. It is for us to choose to do what is right. Faithful performance of duty prepares us to face future emergencies.

### 2. Daniel to the Rescue (Verse 8).

God does not hold back from us anything that is for our good. Nebuchadnezzar needed to have an answer to his anxious questions. He needed to learn how to relate to the future. Most of all he needed to yield his heart and mind to God. In His love for the king God sent Daniel to help him.

**Why was it providential that Daniel should come "at the last"? Dan. 4:8, 9.**

"Once more in this idolatrous nation, testimony was to be borne to the fact that only those who love and fear God can understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The king in his perplexity sent for his servant Daniel, a man esteemed for his integrity and constancy and for his unrivaled wisdom."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 516.

Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel as Belteshazzar, "according to the name of my god" (Verse 8). This last phrase points to a clinging to pagan practices. It is difficult for a person who has grown up in a particular culture to let it go in every respect.

Although we may understand Nebuchadnezzar's problems with culture and environment, we must not excuse the unexcusable. If he was to be saved he would have to make a break with the heathen gods and recognize that Yahweh is not just another god, but the God of gods, the only God.

In the circumstances of the failure of the Babylonian wise men to give the king the answer he needed and the presence of Daniel who satisfied a need, we see how God worked with Nebuchadnezzar to bring him to a right way of thinking. The king certainly had his faults, but he seems to have been an honest man who had "an innate sense of justice and right" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 515). God could use him, and God could bring him around to right thinking.



**What is the significance of that which Nebuchadnezzar admitted that he could see in Daniel? Dan. 4:8, 9.**

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Because the Hebrew word for God has a plural form, although it is used with a verb in the singular, it is possible that the correct translation should be "God" and not "gods" in verse 8. Because Daniel was filled with the Spirit of God he exerted a holy influence wherever he went. He always inspired the best in everyone, condemning foolishness, but commending righteousness. He could be depended upon to give the best advice and to promote the best causes.

**THINK IT THROUGH: Would you not like to be a Daniel in this sense? Do you think that, by God's grace, you could be a Daniel in your environment? What do you need to do in order to cooperate with God in achieving such a goal?**

### **3. The Dream (Verses 9-18).**

This time the dream was not about an image, but about a tree. It was such a tall tree that it seemed to reach to the heavens and such a big tree that it seemed it could be seen from any part of the globe. In our modern scientific sophistication we may question such a possibility, but we must not forget the point of the dream: the tree represented a kingdom that covered the then known world and had great influence. It provided food and shelter to all who were within its domain. (See Daniel 4:10-12.)

**SEARCH AND LEARN: How fitting is the symbol of a tree for an individual person or nation? What do the texts that follow indicate?**

- Psalm 1:3 \_\_\_\_\_
- Eze. 31:3-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Nebuchadnezzar had seen the cedars of Lebanon. He probably saw them being felled and may have used some of the wood for his building projects.

The province of Babylon did not have many large trees. It had the date palm

which was valued for its fruit, but its stem is limited in its uses. Nebuchadnezzar must have been impressed greatly by the tree he saw in his dream. It was a tree that brought benefits to many creatures. To cut it down was not only a tragedy to the tree, but a loss to the creatures who profited from its shade and branches. It is no wonder that the king was troubled by the dream and wanted to know its interpretation.

**How did what happened to the tree concern the king, and who gave the verdict? Dan. 4: 13-17.**

What happened to the tree was of immense concern to the king. Evidently some tragic event was to take place. But what was the meaning of the stump being bound with iron and bronze? What did the "seven times" mean? Who are the "watchers," the "holy ones"? He needed a clear interpretation.



#### **4. The Interpretation (Dan. 4:19-27).**

The dream was not easy to interpret; not because of its complexity but because of its obvious import. Somebody was going to be hurt, and the hurt would come as the result of a decision made by an authority that could not be resisted.

**How was Daniel affected as he contemplated the dream, and how did the king encourage him? Dan. 4:19.**

It is not easy to tell a powerful king that he will lose his power. As is true of nearly everyone, kings like to hear good news, not bad. The good news was that the marvelous tree represented Nebuchadnezzar himself. He was like a tall tree that brought blessing to many.

The bad news was that he would lose his power, lose his mind, and live like an animal for seven years. But he would be restored to power when he came to the place where he would acknowledge that the God of heaven is in command of everyone and everything. (See Daniel 4:24-26.)

Imagine how you would feel if you were King Nebuchadnezzar. Can you imagine how Daniel felt as he outlined the meaning of the dream to the King who had always been good to him, who had expressed such confidence in him?

**What does the way in which Daniel concluded his interpretation teach us about tactfulness? Dan. 4:27.**

Daniel felt that he had to appeal to the king to renounce his sin, and do what was right. There is only one attitude to take toward sin. That is to determine, by God's grace, not to sin. To continue in sin is to court disaster.

Up to this point we have not been told what the king's particular sin was. Later it is revealed that he indulged in pride of achievement. Naturally, he did not build Babylon with his own hands. Probably he used forced labor. It would be expected in those days that his inspectors and supervisors would be cruel to the laborers. Daniel suggested that the king change his policies and be kind to the oppressed. If he did this, there was a chance that he would continue to be blessed of God and be prosperous.



**5. Prediction Fulfilled (Verses 28-30).**

"All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar," reports Daniel 4:28 (NIV). A year later while walking on the roof of his palace, the king contemplated the city that stretched out before him. He noted its magnificent temples and ziggurats, its spectacular colored gates and procession street, and its hum of busy activity that indicated prosperity and peace. His heart filled with pride. He claimed for himself the honor that Daniel had told him before should be attributed to God.

**III. NEBUCHADNEZZAR CONVERTED BY ADVERSITY (Dan. 4:31-37).**

Immediately the heavenly decree was sent forth telling the king what his punishment would be.

**What were some of the things that would happen to the king? Dan. 4:31, 32.**

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We do not know what kind of a disease took hold of him. It is possible that it was a malady not often duplicated. One thing is certain; for seven years he was treated as a madman. It was obvious that others would have to take over the affairs of state.

In other circumstances the reins of government would have been taken away from Nebuchadnezzar altogether. It is conceivable that there were many others who would have been happy to take over. Some of the provinces could have seized the opportunity to rebel and secede. But nothing like that happened. The tree was cut down, but the stump remained. The mad king would have to come to his senses and recognize the supreme authority of the God in heaven.

**How did the king of Babylon express his regard for God when his sanity returned? Daniel 4: 34, 35.**

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The angel that has the everlasting gospel to preach to all the earth in the last days of history declares: "Fear God, and give glory to him" (Rev. 14:7). There is a strong tendency on the part of people to attribute glory to themselves when they have accomplished something good or great. They fall into the same sin as Nebuchadnezzar. It is by God's grace alone that they do not suffer what the Babylonian king had to suffer.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Would we not do well to remember to give God the glory for everything that we may have accomplished? It is He who gives life, health, and skill and everything else that is necessary for the achievement of anything that is good. Perhaps you should pause a moment and thank God for all that He has done for you. You may want to give a testimony of praise before others of how much you appreciate what God has done and is doing for you.

NOTES:



What is the significance of the way King Nebuchadnezzar concluded his proclamation? Dan. 4:36, 37.

The king testified that with his restoration he became greater than he was before. God has a way of making up to us for the lean years in our experience. (See Job. 42:12-16.) We cannot doubt but that we have a gracious God, who only wants what is best for us. We shall always feel that we are unprofitable servants, but God blesses us much beyond what we deserve. (See Luke 17:10.)

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled "True Greatness," in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 514-521.

**SUMMARY:** In this lesson we see once again that God is concerned about everyone, the heathen as well as the god-fearing. He will communicate with those who apparently reject Him as well as those who seek to worship Him. He is no respecter of persons. (See Rom. 2:11.)

Furthermore, there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents. (See Luke 15:7.) It took God a long time, but King Nebuchadnezzar finally was converted.

"The once proud monarch had become a humble child of God; the tyrannical, overbearing ruler, a wise and compassionate king. . . . Under the rebuke of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, Nebuchadnezzar had learned at last the lesson which all rulers need to learn—that true greatness consists in true goodness."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 521.

**APPLICATION:** Have I formed a team with God, as Daniel did, to work for the conversion of all whom He wants me to influence? Is there someone I have been praying for to whom I should speak this week about salvation? Do I know someone presently under the conviction of the Holy Spirit who has not yet made a commitment for whom I should be praying? Is there something I can do this week to have a part in someone's conversion?

**NOTES:**

# Weighed and Found Wanting

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 5.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We have the responsibility of learning our lessons from those who have gone before us. Belshazzar did not. That was one reason why there could be only one judgment on his life. He was found wanting and had to suffer the consequences.

<b>Daniel 5: The Fall of Ancient Babylon</b>	
<b>An Arrogant Ruler</b>	<b>Judgment on Babylon</b>
A drunken orgy—vs. 1 An act of impiety—vss. 2-4 From arrogance to fear—vss. 6, 7	The failure of the elite—vss. 8-12 Daniel's dialogue with the king— vss. 13-24 Judgment pronounced and executed—vss. 25-31

**INTRODUCTION:** This chapter in the book of Daniel records the events of the last night of Babylon's independence. It presents a sad story of indulgence when there should have been watchfulness; of drinking when there should have been sober contemplation of the seriousness of the times; and of impiety when there was the greatest need to call upon God for help. It also presents us with a story of how arrogance suddenly can be turned into terror. The senseless behavior of Babylon's rulers was brought to a halt as God pronounced judgment in no uncertain terms.

This story leads us to wonder what we can do in our situation today to prevent tragedies, to warn of danger, and to give a testimony to God that can be as effective as what Daniel did in Babylon.

Are there parallels to what is happening in our time? Do we have opportunities to know the truth that we are neglecting? Are we wasting our time in activities of little consequence when the end of the world is upon us? Will we be found wanting in the day of judgment?

The objective of this lesson is not to frighten us, but to turn our attention to matters of great consequence. We must choose our companions wisely. We must by God's grace order our lives according to the principles of God's Word as revealed through His prophets. When our lives are committed with-

out reservation to Christ and His will "we may have boldness in the day of judgment" (1 John 4:17).



## I. AN ARROGANT RULER (Dan. 5:1-7).

There is no doubt about it, power corrupts, and absolute power has in it the seeds of absolute corruption.

### 1. A Drunken Orgy (Verse 1).

Considering the who, when, and where of Belshazzar's feast, why was the timing so inappropriate? What did Belshazzar do in front of his guests? Verse 1.

Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father, was ruler of Babylon, but had left Belshazzar as coregent in Babylon while he was away preparing for a military campaign. The combined armies of the Medes and the Persians were besieging the city of Babylon. However, the Babylonians considered their city impregnable.

Having a feast at such a time was foolhardy. It may be that Belshazzar thought he was showing confidence in the impregnability of the walls of Babylon. But times of impending danger are not times to be spent in carousing. The least that would be expected would be that Belshazzar would conserve his food supply; making sure that his citizens were well provided for and protected.

But the young king did not face the situation with common sense. With an air of bravado he called upon his lords to feast with him. They did so subserviently; closing their eyes and ears to the reality around them.

"He drank wine before his guests." The suggestion is that he led out in the drinking, setting an example of being intoxicated. The host was expected to observe proper decorum. But Daniel gives us a glimpse of the king as one who could not maintain his dignity. As he indulged himself without reserve, his reason became "dethroned through shameless intoxication" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 523).

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What do the following passages teach about avoiding the use of intoxicating beverages?

- Prov. 20:1 \_\_\_\_\_
- Prov. 23:31, 32 \_\_\_\_\_
- Gal. 5:21 \_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** "The history of Nadab and Abihu is also given as a warning to man, showing that the effect of wine upon the intellect is to confuse. And it will ever have this influence upon the minds of those who use it. Therefore God explicitly forbids the use of wine and strong drink."—*Temperance*, p. 92.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Why is it particularly important for Christians to maintain good health and practice temperance in these last days of earth's history?

**2. An Act of Impiety (Daniel 5:2-4).**

It is bad enough to be guilty of breaking the laws of health; but when, in addition, a person is guilty of showing disrespect to God's house or the symbols of God's truth, insult is added to injury.

**In what way did the king show his disrespect for the God of the Jewish captives? Verse 2.**

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The silver and golden vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem were stored in the "house of his god" (Dan. 1:2). This action symbolized that he considered his god greater than the God of the Temple in Jerusalem. But Nebuchadnezzar had been shown by a number of experiences that this concept was false. He finally had come to see that the God of heaven was a God of gods, and King of kings.

Belshazzar, however, had not learned this lesson. He had refused to consider the evidence. There was no good reason for him to ask for the vessels from the Jerusalem temple to be brought to the palace on this occasion. But one step in the wrong direction often leads to another. Belshazzar added to his sin of drunken revelry the sin of presumption. That which had been dedicated to God's use was now to be used for a purely secular use. Men and women who had no concept of the sacred, no reverence for the true God, were to touch and handle the vessels as though they were ordinary objects to be treated as they pleased.

The vessels were no doubt beautifully formed and shaped. The craftsmen had used unusual skill in preparing them for sacred use. We can imagine the delight of the guests as they saw the beauty and preciousness of the vessels brought in for their use.

**Instead of being impressed with the dedication of those who had prepared the vessels for use in the temple and instead of recognizing them as symbols of the service of the one true God, what did the guests at Belshazzar's feast begin to do? Dan. 5:4.**

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They could not see beyond the object before them. Like others who serve the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25), they praised gods who are no gods. The entire company engaged in an act that insulted God and showed their preference for the worship of anything but the One who deserved their worship.

**3. From Arrogance to Fear (Dan. 5:6, 7).**

**Besides natural fear what contributed to the king's terrified reaction when he saw the supernatural handwriting on the wall? Verse 6.**

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The king felt secure within the walls of Babylon. He had the support of a thousand of his lords gathered about him. He was experiencing the warmth of drink and food in his stomach. But suddenly he felt helpless and hopeless.

It was obvious that there was a Power that was able to come unbidden to his feast. That Power had written with a finger on the plaster of the walls. The writing was so prominent that he could not avoid seeing it. This was not a case of



illusion, nor even delirium tremens, frightening as that could have been. The supernatural was manifesting itself. "The terror was heightened by an accusing conscience, which roused itself and filled the king with dark forebodings."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 802.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What was the reaction of other human beings whose encounters with God are described in the Bible?

- Moses (Ex. 3:1-5) \_\_\_\_\_
- Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-5) \_\_\_\_\_
- John (Rev. 1:17) \_\_\_\_\_

The physical aspects mentioned in connection with the king's expression of fear are striking: his face became ashen; nervous movements indicated that he could not think what to do; he lost control of his joints so that his thighs wobbled unnaturally and his knees knocked against one another uncontrollably. The king who had been so self-assured at the beginning of the banquet, had become a pitiable object of despair.

Crying aloud for the wise men of Babylon to be brought in to read the handwriting on the wall, he promised that if anyone could read the writing and interpret it he would give that person the highest honor next to his own in the land. The interpreter also would be clothed in scarlet, and a golden chain would be placed around his neck.

## II. JUDGMENT ON BABYLON (Dan. 5:8-31).

The moment had come for king and subjects to face the results of their rebellion before the Judge of all the earth. They must listen to the sentence He was about to pronounce. They had reached a point in their lives that all of us must reach—the time of evaluation and judgment.

### 1. The Failure of the Elite (verses 8, 9).

Imagine the scene. See the king and his guests cowering. There is a deadly hush, except for the whispering among the scholars as they try to make sense of what is written on the wall. But they do not have a clue. Shamefacedly they confess their ignorance and inability to solve the problem.

Greater consternation takes hold of the king. The lords fall into deep perplexity. What can all this mean? Who can deliver them from their dilemma?

**What viable solution did the queen mother offer for their dilemma? Dan. 5:10-12.**



With proper reserve and dignity, the queen mother had refrained from taking part in the banquet. But when she heard of what had happened in the hall—for bad news has a way of traveling rapidly—she hurried in to tell the king that there was someone in the kingdom who was able to read the writing on the wall because (1) he had the spirit of the holy gods, (2) he had proved his expertise on previous occasions, and (3) because of his great skill he had been made the president of the wise men by Nebuchadnezzar. The queen mother urged that Daniel be called in to solve the problem.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** As you recall, this was not the first time that the wise men of Babylon had failed their ruler in an emergency. When wise men today prove not to be so wise, what can we do to direct people to the Source of truth?

In each case when the wise men failed, a captive Jew was able to provide what the king needed, not through some personal quality or insight, but because he was in touch with the Revealer of Mysteries—the God of heaven. God not only knows everything, but is prepared to share that information with human beings if doing so will help men and women recognize the difference between the false and the true God.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** The conflict between true and false wisdom continues down to our own day. Can you give examples?

### 2. Daniel's Dialogue with the King (Dan. 5:13-24).

Because of the gift of prophecy Daniel had no difficulty in interpreting the writing on the wall. But before he gave the king the interpretation, he let Belshazzar know that he was not interested in any reward. For one thing, the reward would be meaningless with the fall of Babylon. For another, as a servant of God he needed no inducement to serve the king, even though the king was unworthy of honor. Daniel's life was dedicated to service. He would use his skills and his connection with heaven to do what he could to help people.

Daniel also took advantage of the moment to preach a sermonette. He wanted the king to know the real source of his tragedy. It was that he had not learned the lessons God had taught his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. God had humbled the grandfather and taken the dominion away from him until he had acknowledged the true God and made a proclamation to this effect. But Belshazzar had knowingly and willfully despised the God of the Jewish captives by dishonoring the vessels that had been dedicated to sacred service in the temple at Jerusalem. He had praised the gods of gold and silver, gods which in reality did not exist except in the imagination of those who should have known better.

**What happens when people turn away from the evidence of their own eyes? Rom 1:20-23.**

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**THINK IT THROUGH:** Are we grateful for what God is doing and has done for us? How do we show our gratitude?

### **3. Judgment Pronounced and Executed (Dan. 5:25-31).**

**What significance did the handwriting on the wall have for the king of Babylon? Verses 25-28.**

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The words transliterated in the Bible may not have much meaning for us. But Daniel's interpretation was clear. The period of political supremacy for Babylon had come to an end. The king and those associated with him in rulership had proved unworthy of the privilege granted to them. The kingdom was about to pass into the hands of another political power, that of the Medes and the Persians.

No one listening to Daniel's interpretation could have mistaken the import of the writing on the wall if he or she had been sober and in his or her right mind. Was this the case with the king and his courtiers? We do not know. How empty the award ceremony must have been to Daniel as he was clothed with scarlet, a gold chain was put around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third ruler in the land! We do not read that he resisted the proceedings. No doubt he showed his usual tact and regard for high position, even though in his heart he knew the honor was worthless.

**What is the significance of the speed with which the pronounced judgment was executed? Verse 30.**

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Sometimes execution of judgment is delayed, with the hope that repentance will bring about a change in circumstances so that there can be a change of outcome. Jonah prophesied that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days, but when the inhabitants of Nineveh repented, from the king down to the humblest subject, there was a stay of execution. (See Jonah 3:10.) God does not take pleasure in the death of anyone. He wants people to repent and thus make it possible for Him to give them life. (See Isa. 55:7.) But when there is no more



hope of change; when people have made an irrevocable choice, God in His justice must recognize their choice. In that way their probation is closed.

**What has the destruction of the wicked at the end of time been called and what significance do you see in these words? Isa. 28:21.**



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read "The Unseen Watcher" in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 522-538.

A striking last-day application of the writing on the wall is found in *Early Writings*: "I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus' work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob's trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God. The 144,000 triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God. Then I was shown a company who were howling in agony. On their garments was written in large characters, 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.' I asked who this company were. The angel said, 'These are they who have once kept the Sabbath and have given it up.' I heard them cry with a loud voice, 'We have believed in Thy coming, and taught it with energy.' And while they were speaking, their eyes would fall upon their garments and see the writing, and they would wail aloud. I saw that they had drunk of the deep waters, and fouled the residue with their feet—trodden the Sabbath underfoot—and that was why they were weighed in the balance and found wanting."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 36, 37.

**SUMMARY:** This fifth chapter of Daniel presents a sad commentary on how the wisdom of parents is not always passed on to the children. It is a blessing when children turn out to be good in spite of the wickedness of the parents. The fact is that although there are influences both ways, each person has to make his or her own choice. Upon that choice rests the individual's eternal destiny.

#### **APPLICATION:**

- It is amazing how we people can become attached to gods that are not gods. Can you explain this fact of history? Can God do more than He has done to reveal Himself and turn people's minds to the truth? Think about how God has revealed Himself to you in times past.
- Why do people drink and smoke when they know it does them harm? What can you share from your own experience as being the best way to keep people from forming bad habits?
- Why does the exercise of power tend to corrupt? If you are in a position of authority do you pray that God will help you to use your authority in the way that would please Him? Is it true to say that all of us have a sphere of authority which we cannot escape? Name some spheres of authority which even the humblest person has.

# Survival of the Holiest

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 6.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Ps. 91:2).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Those who will inherit the kingdom of heaven, are not necessarily the strongest physically, the smartest intellectually, or the bravest socially. They are those who have dedicated their lives to God's service, and who will not let any pressure or circumstance cause them to turn aside from doing God's will. They live to please God.

Overview: Daniel 6		
Verses 1-9	Verses 10-20	Verses 21-28
An Evil Plot	Deliverance Sought	A Lesson Taught

**INTRODUCTION:** The events of chapter six took place in Babylon, but under a new administration. The Neo-Babylonian empire came to an end with the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians. A Median king, Darius, was set up by Cyrus, as shadow king in Babylon itself.

The new ruler was sixty-two years of age, experienced, but finding it a little difficult to adapt himself to the new circumstances. He knew what he wanted to do, but found the various pressure groups in Babylon rather overpowering. Daniel must have been in his eighties. Because of his wisdom and skill he seems to have won the confidence of Darius. Daniel was tactful and recognized as patiently honest. Darius found in him one he could trust, even though he had served under the previous administration.



## I. AN EVIL PLOT (Dan. 6:1-9).

It does not matter what kind of government is in power, there always will be personal differences between officials and personal preferences shown by leaders. Such matters decide the efficiency of the government. At some stage a choice has to be made of people to fill positions. When that choice is made there are some who approve and some who disapprove.

### 1. Daniel Honored (Verses 1-3).

On what basis did Darius choose to place Daniel highest in the hierarchy of administration? Verse 3.

**NOTE some of the characteristics that made Daniel stand out as a leader of men:**

1. *Age.* By the time Darius began his rule Daniel was a respected older counselor. Often maturity is a factor in gaining the respect of others. Of course, age by itself is not sufficient to qualify people for high office, especially if their age involves the weakening of their powers. Because of the blessing of God on his faithful witness, Daniel became an influential counselor while still a young man.

2. *Experience.* Because some people do not learn much from experience, experience alone is not a sufficient basis for leadership. But those who grow with the responsibilities given them can approach new tasks with the confidence that comes from having been successful before.

3. *Education.* Daniel not only knew the history of his own people, but was well-versed in the learning of the Babylonians. There is nothing to be gained from ignorance. Daniel was able to understand and communicate. Those with whom he came in contact could have confidence that he knew what he was talking about.

4. *Integrity.* Daniel could be trusted to be honest and straightforward. He did not let such biases as those of race, rank, or wealth sway him one way or the other. He sought to be just, fair, and merciful.

5. *God-fearing and pious.* Daniel knew and worshiped God. He communed with Him, receiving wisdom and guidance in his daily duties. He did not wear his religion on his sleeve, but everyone knew that he was a follower of the true God.

**THINK IT THROUGH: Can you think of other characteristics that would come under the heading of "an excellent spirit"? List them below and be prepared to share them in class discussion.**

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## **2. Professional Jealousy (Dan. 6:4).**

**What is significant about the way the presidents and the princes reacted to the appointment of Daniel to the highest post in the realm? Verse 4.**

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**THINK IT THROUGH: What do you think is included in the term "faithful"? Would you include the following:**

1. He never accepted a bribe to swerve him in his judgments.
2. He never granted favors on a purely personal basis.
3. He never used public funds for his personal needs.
4. He never undermined properly-constituted authority by sympathizing with dissidents.
5. He never wasted time.
6. He lived up to the highest principles of right living.
7. He always sought to understand people, work for their best interests, and give good counsel.
8. He took his responsibilities seriously.

Professional jealousy lay at the basis of the opposition to Daniel's preferment.

Undoubtedly there were other factors, such as racial prejudice against one who originally was a captive. Whatever else may have been involved, the feelings were so strong that the other presidents and some of the princes were seeking some legitimate reason for destroying Daniel.

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### 3. The Plot (Dan. 6:5-9).

**What area of Daniel's personal life did the presidents and princes choose as the area of attack and why? Verse 5.**

In the matter of doing what he understood that God required of him Daniel was steadfast and firm. At the very beginning of the captivity he had purposed not to be defiled with the food that came from the king's table. He had pursued his goal tactfully, but with determination. If he had been on the plain of Dura, he would have taken the same stand as his three companions and refused to bow down to the golden image, even though the threatened result of disobedience was death. Daniel knew that God would not let anyone down who was determined to be faithful to Him. The prophet was not afraid to talk plainly to Nebuchadnezzar about his need to be humble and give God the glory for everything that he possessed. He was not slow to rebuke Belshazzar before the assembled nobles, nor to speak plainly of impending personal disaster. The presidents and the princes knew that if they could bring in some regulation that affected the principles by which Daniel lived, they would be able to put him on the wrong side of the law—not the law of God, but the law of the king.

The scheme proposed had to do with prayer or making petitions. For thirty days no one in the kingdom was to offer a prayer to or make a petition of any god. The king alone was to be the one to whom petitions were presented during that period. The king, who could think of no reason why anyone should have problems with not going to the temple and not praying for thirty days, was flattered with the thought that he was the only one that anyone should come to with a petition. He readily agreed to sign the decree proposed by a majority of the officials whom he had appointed.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the texts that follow and indicate some of the reasons Daniel could not go along with the king's decree:**

Psalm 55:16, 17 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 122:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer. 29:7, 12-14 \_\_\_\_\_

In no way could Daniel cease praying for even one day, let alone for 30 days. The expressed will of his God was clear. He would not disobey.

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## II. DELIVERANCE SOUGHT (Dan. 6:10-20).

### 1. Daniel's Faithful Witness (verse 10).

**How did Daniel respond as soon as he heard of the decree that King Darius had signed? Dan. 6:10.**

There are some significant points to note in this verse:

- Daniel continued without hesitation to follow his regular prayer habits. If he had to make a choice between doing what was right, and disobeying the law of the land, he would do what was right.

- Daniel did not protest the new law before the king. After all, the king could do as he pleased, and to attempt a protest in the circumstances would only create misunderstandings. The king would have to live with his decisions, just as all of us have to live with the choices we make.

- The windows in the upstairs room (see verse 10, NIV) in Daniel's home were open toward Jerusalem. This indicates the direction of Daniel's thought; he was concerned about Jerusalem. Furthermore, Solomon in his dedicatory prayer of the temple, had suggested that effective prayer should be offered in the direction of Jerusalem. (See 2 Chron. 6:26, 34, 38.)

- Daniel's worship patterns were no secret. Open windows do not keep out prying eyes. Nor did Daniel feel that he ought to keep his religious practices secret. Even when he would be breaking the law of the land by praying, he felt that the honest thing to do was to continue worshiping openly as he had done before. To do otherwise would be to show fear of what people may do, or to practice deceit.

- Daniel was not doing something merely to be contrary. He did not take pleasure in breaking the law, or issue a challenge with a sense of bravado. In the circumstances his conscience told him that he must be true to his religious principles. He must be true to God. To do otherwise would be to deny his faith.

**Daniel's attitude and practice at this time indicate how we should respond in similar circumstances. How did Peter and the other apostles express the principle that should guide our response? Acts 5:29.**

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Christians should not make themselves a nuisance or seek persecution. But when the issue is straightforward and clear—when it is a question of human law being opposed to God's law—Christians must determine to follow God's will, no matter what the consequences.

## 2. The Accusation (Dan. 6:11-13).

The presidents and the princes did not go to Daniel in order to try to persuade him to change his practices. Their minds were closed. They were out to destroy him and his influence.

**THINK IT THROUGH: How do you react when you hear of such injustices? How do you respond if you happen to be the victim? How far should we go in defending ourselves in such cases?**

When we suffer from this kind of injustice we need to pray that we may react like Daniel; not seeking to destroy anyone, or even to show them up, but being faithful in the line of our God-given duty.

## 3. The King's Response (Dan. 6:14-20).

King Darius demonstrated that he was honest, if misguided. He did not seek to cause trouble to anyone, least of all on religious grounds. But he was subject to flattery and manipulation.

How did Darius react when he heard that Daniel was in trouble over a decree that the king had signed? Verse 14.

It is remarkable that Darius should be "sore displeased" with himself rather than with Daniel. He knew that he had made a mistake. But because Daniel was his first president the king should have consulted with Daniel before signing the decree. Because he had been pressured into signing, he had not given the matter sufficient thought. Now he was caught in a bind, trapped within the tradition that the laws of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed.

Darius did everything he could to come up with some way of protecting Daniel. The Scripture says that "he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him" (Dan. 6:14). The king consulted with several counselors, hoping to find a loophole in the law. But no one could help him.

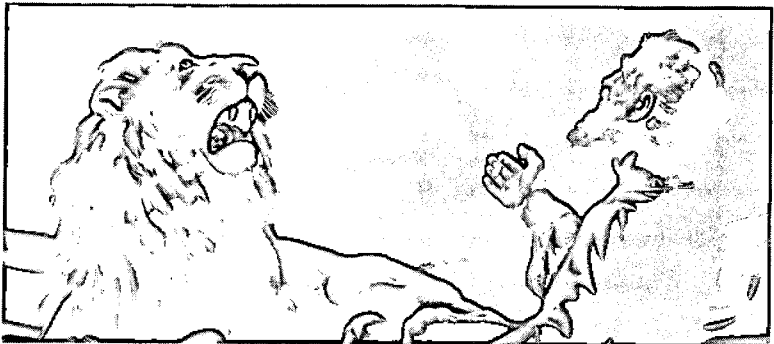
Finally the pressure group came back. They pointed out that Darius could not change the terms of the decree. There could be one verdict alone that would fit Daniel's case—that was to throw Daniel to the mercy of the lions. The king was trapped by his own words. He was the captive of a pressure group, a victim of national customs and traditions. Reluctantly, but nevertheless effectively, he was forced to issue the command: Daniel was to be thrown to the lions. Darius's one consolation was that he could hope that Daniel's God would deliver him.

What does the way that the king spent the rest of that day and night reveal about the genuineness of his concern? (Dan. 6:18). What did he do early the next morning? (Dan. 6:19, 20).



### III. A LESSON TAUGHT (Dan. 6:21-28).

The story of Daniel's escape from the lions is a familiar one, but we never tire of hearing it rehearsed. Why is that? Is it because of the ending: right prevails and wickedness is punished? Or is it because we can identify with Darius and Daniel? Perhaps it is because we so often see wrong prevailing, and are delighted when wrong finally is overthrown. We are sympathetic with the weakness of Darius, glad for the strength of Daniel, but supremely happy for a God in heaven who can shut the mouths of lions when it is best for His work on earth.



**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What character traits of Daniel are brought out in the last part of this story?

- Verse 20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Verse 22 \_\_\_\_\_
- Verse 23 \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of a God did Darius recognize Daniel's God to be? Verses 26-28.

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**THINK IT THROUGH:** God often sends His angels to protect us. Am I aware of a circumstance in which God sent divine protection?

The confession of the king is the major concern in this part of the lesson. Just as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, Darius the king of the Medes issued a proclamation that went to every part of the empire. The God of Daniel was exalted. He is not only the living God, but He rules a kingdom that will have no end. Furthermore, He is active in the affairs of this planet. He delivers and rescues. He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. Once again a heathen king was led to recognize a God greater than any god he had seen before. Darius came to see that worship belongs to the true God alone.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled "In the Lions' Den," in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 539-548.

*Meditate on this thought:* Ours will be a beautiful relationship with God when we can say in every circumstance, Our trust is in God and we shall do what is right, by His grace, whatever may be the consequences.

*Consider the following:* "The spirit that possessed Daniel, the youth of today may have; they may draw from the same source of strength, possess the same power of self-control, and reveal the same grace in their lives, even in circumstances as unfavorable."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 489, 490.

**SUMMARY:** Although Daniel was a captive in a foreign land, his lot had fallen on pleasant places. Yet the pleasantness that surrounded him did not dull his ability to remain true under unpleasant circumstances. Even in a lion's den his faith remained strong. God turned a horrifying event into a spectacular opportunity to witness to a new empire.

**APPLICATION:**

- What do you see in Daniel that made him a person that God could use effectively for His purposes? How can you, with the Lord's help, develop more of the same characteristics?
  - What other applications do you find in this story?
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# Worldly Powers and a Heavenly Court

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel chapter 7.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** All receive a just reward for their deeds. (See Eccl. 12:13, 14.) The Judge of all the earth is long-suffering, but eventually He will act to vindicate His name and His people.

OVERVIEW: Daniel 7	
Vision	Interpretation
Four beasts and a little horn— vss. 1-8	Four kingdoms and a persecuting power— vss. 15-21, 23-25
The judgment scene in heaven— vss. 9-12	Judgment takes away dominion—vs. 26
The Son of man coming to Ancient of Days—vss. 13, 14	Dominion given to the saints—vss. 22, 27
Daniel troubled—vs. 28	

**INTRODUCTION:** This chapter begins the second half of the book of Daniel—the half that focuses on Daniel's visions, his reactions to them, and a revelation of events that are to take place from Daniel's day to the end of time. This chapter has been called a "fascinating, tantalizing, and challenging" one.

The dream described in this chapter was given in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar about 550/549 B.C. Assuming that Daniel was 18 years old when he was taken captive in 605 B.C., he would be about 73 years old. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. He was succeeded by his son, Amel-Marduk. But Amel-Marduk reigned only two years. He was killed by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who reigned only four years. Neriglissar's son was on the throne only a few months when Nabonidus, a Babylonian nobleman who was married to Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, seized the reins of government. Because Nabonidus preferred to live in Tema in Arabia, he placed his son, Belshazzar, on the throne as second in command. Babylon obviously was in a state of decline.

As a statesman, Daniel would be watching events with great interest. The golden days of Babylon apparently had passed. What would the future hold in store? How would Nebuchadnezzar's dream be fulfilled? How long would God put up with violence and injustice? God graciously gave Daniel a dream in order to provide some answers to these questions.



**I. THE VISION (Dan. 7:1-14).**

Jesus told His disciples that He did not consider them servants, but friends. (See John 15:15.) God treats us as His friends when He reveals His secrets to us through His servants the prophets. (See Amos 3:7.)

**1. Four Beasts and a Little Horn (Verses 1-8).**

In the teaching process visual aids are important; a picture is worth a thousand words! Particularly when it came to prophecy, God chose to illustrate coming events in vivid representational images.

**Why is it profitable to review the course of history as developed in Bible prophecy?**

“A careful study of the working out of God’s purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, will help us to estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen, and to learn what is the true aim of life. Thus, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may, like Daniel and his fellows, live for that which is true and noble and enduring. And learning in this life the principles of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, that blessed kingdom which is to endure for ever and ever, we may be prepared at His coming to enter with Him into its possession.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 548.

**Describe in your own words each beast or power introduced in verses 2-8:**

1. The first beast: \_\_\_\_\_
2. The second beast: \_\_\_\_\_
3. The third beast: \_\_\_\_\_
4. The fourth beast: \_\_\_\_\_
5. The little horn: \_\_\_\_\_

Re-read Daniel 7:2-8 to make sure you have left nothing important out of your description.

**2. The Judgment Scene in Heaven (Dan. 7:9-12).**

If Daniel had wondered how long God would tolerate injustice, violence, and blasphemy he was not left in doubt. Even while things are happening on earth, momentous preparations are being made in heaven; there is to be a judgment in which the wicked and the just are separated, and sentence will be pronounced on the wicked. “A symbolic representation of the great final assize [judgment], fixing the destinies of men and of nations, is here brought to view.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 828.

**SEARCH AND LEARN: Answer the questions that follow:**

1. What is the significance of the title given to the One who will take His seat as Judge? Dan. 7:9.

2. How did Moses similarly address God? Psalm 90:2.

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3. Summarize how the psalmist speaks of God as Judge in Psalm 50:1-6.

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4. How did Moses describe God to the children of Israel? Deut. 4:24.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What does fire issuing from God do? Psalm 97:3.

\_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** "Daniel is shown the final judgment in both its phases, investigative and executive. . . . The investigation is not conducted for the information of God or of Christ, but for the information of the universe at large—that God may be vindicated in accepting some and rejecting others."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 828.

*"The judgment was set."* The words are simple, but the implications are tremendous! The fate of every individual will be decided forever.

*"The books were opened."* The Bible refers to a number of "books" of records.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Read the following texts and list the names of the books indicated:

Ps. 69:28 \_\_\_\_\_

Mal. 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 3:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 20:12 \_\_\_\_\_

The records are kept so that anyone in the universe who might challenge God's justice can have access to the facts involved.



**What is one outcome of the judgment? Dan. 7:11.**

As a result of the judgment the persecuting beast and the blasphemous horn will be destroyed. God is the source of life, but the wages of sin and rebellion is death. Note how thorough the destruction will be: (1) The beast is slain, and the horn with it—it can no longer be active, (2) the body is destroyed—there is no possibility of its reappearance, and (3) the body is given to the burning flame—there is no possibility of contamination.

**3. The Son of Man Coming to the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13, 14).**

**What do we learn about where the judgment takes place? Daniel 7:13.**

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What a contrast between this Person who comes to the Ancient of Days to receive a kingdom, and the rulers of the world. They were likened to ferocious beasts, and their rule came to an end. The one like the Son of man comes to receive a kingdom which will never pass away.

**Who is the “Son of man” mentioned as receiving the kingdom in Daniel 7:13, 14?**

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The evidence points Him out as “an individual eschatological heavenly being.” He is “the Michael (Daniel 10:13, 21, 12:1)” —Arthur Ferch, “The Judgment Scene in Daniel 7,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association), p. 165.

Jesus referred to Himself as the “Son of man.” (See Matt. 8:20; 11:19; 16:13.) In this way He linked Himself with humanity. At the same time He did not deny His divinity. (See Matt. 9:6; 24:30; Mark 2:28.)

**ILLUMINATION:** “God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the ‘Son of man’ who shares the throne of the universe.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

**When does this event of Christ coming to the Ancient of Days to receive a kingdom take place?**

“The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, [is] represented.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 426. “While still in heaven, Christ receives the kingdom from His Father and then returns to earth for His saints.” —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 830.

**II. THE INTERPRETATION (Dan. 7:15-27).**

**How was Daniel affected by the vision? Dan. 7:15. Why do you think that this was so? To whom did Daniel go for enlightenment? Verse 16.**

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It is a sign of wisdom when we go to the right place for information. Unfortunately sinful beings have a tendency to go to the wrong places. (See Isa. 8:19.) When we need light we must turn to the source of light.






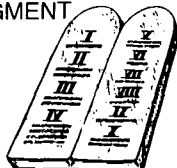

**1. Four Kingdoms and a Persecuting Power (Dan. 7:17-21, 23-25).**

**COMPARE** the beasts of Daniel 7 with the image of Daniel 2 by studying the chart that follows. Note which empires or powers were represented.

COMPARISON OF DANIEL'S SYMBOLIC VISIONS

DANIEL 7

DANIEL 2

 LION	BABYLON	GOLD
 BEAR	PERSIA	SILVER
 LEOPARD	GREECE	BRASS
 FIERCE BEAST	ROME	IRON
LITTLE HORN 	DIVIDED KINGDOMS	IRON AND CLAY
JUDGMENT 	CHRIST'S KINGDOM	STONE 

What phase of the vision impressed Daniel so much that he wanted to know more about it? Dan. 7: 19-21.

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What do verses 23 through 25 contribute that help us identify the little horn power about which Daniel was so concerned?

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In what way might the little horn's attempts to change times and laws be considered one form of blasphemy?

1. *Times*: It is God who ordains times and seasons. (See Gen. 1:14.) For instance, the day is formed by the rotation of the earth on its own axis, but it begins with sunset, the evening is followed by the morning in the reckoning of a day. The Sabbath was to be counted from even to even. (See Lev. 23:32.) The week is not linked specifically to an astronomical feature. It was divinely designated during the creation week. God was engaged in the creative process for six days, and on the seventh day He rested. (See Gen. 2:1-3.) He hallowed the day, and set it apart as a day of rest. Any attempt to change the time or day of worship, would be an attempt to change what God has revealed in the Bible. No one can change what God has laid down without expressing rebellion against God.

2. *Laws*: There are human and divine laws. Human laws, being made by human authorities can be changed by such powers, but no power can change God's laws. Any human organization or power that claims to speak for God, or enjoins beliefs and practices that are not sanctioned in God's revealed Word is guilty of blasphemy because it takes the place of God.

Has such a power appeared in history? Many Protestant interpreters of prophecy, in common with Seventh-day Adventists, have recognized such a power in the Papacy. That power claims to be able to formulate beliefs not found in the Bible and to have changed the day of worship for Christians from the seventh day to the first.

**How long would the little horn exercise its dominating power? Dan. 7:25.**

The expression "time and times and the dividing of time" represents a period of 1260 years. This finds its fulfilment in the period 538-1798 A.D. (See the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 833, 834.) During that period the Papacy largely dominated life in Europe, persecuted dissidents, and made a number of changes in forms of worship that have no biblical support. Since the end of that prophetic period in 1798 we have been living in the era that Bible prophecy designates as the "time of the end."

The vision of Daniel 8, given two years later, gives added insights to the vision recorded in Daniel 7. Gabriel explained to Daniel that the vision was for the "time of the end" (Dan. 8:17). In a series of time of the end prophecies in Daniel 11:40; 12:1, 4, 9, the 1260 day-year prophecy is linked to and precedes the time of the end. (See Dan. 12:7.) The time of the end is followed by Christ's deliverance of His people. (See Dan. 12:1.)

**Lesson 8 - February 21 Worldly Powers / Heavenly Court**

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Complete the chart that follows in order to clarify how the 1260 day-year period is tied in with the prophecies found in the Book of Revelation:

1260-year text	Period Mentioned	Context in Revelation
Rev. 11:2	42 months	Parallel to Dan. 7:7, 23
Rev. 11:3	1260 days	
Rev. 12:6	1260 days	“Wilderness” period— church persecuted
Rev. 12:14	2 1/2 times	
Rev. 13:5	42 months	When the first beast of Rev. 13 is in power

When these prophecies in Revelation are combined with those in Daniel, it becomes clear that this prophecy covers an expanded period of time and cannot be isolated to a literal period of three-and-one-half years.

### 2. Judgment Takes Away Dominion (Dan. 7:26).

In the world there often is miscarriage of justice, but that is not true in the universe where God is the supreme Judge. What may seem to be delay really is never delay. God in His wisdom and mercy delays sentence and execution until it is apparent to all created beings that God is right and needs to take action. Then action comes.

**How is the certainty of the judgment indicated in Daniel 7:26? What is taken away from the persecuting powers?**



### 3. Dominion Given to the Saints (Dan. 7:22, 27).

**What else indicates that the apparent success of the little horn is only temporary? Dan. 7:22.**

All of us are responsible for our actions. (See Romans 14:10-12.) All will have to face the Great Judge. Therefore we should take into consideration everything that will affect the determination about our future, including being careful about judging others. (See Matt. 7:1.) It is human to condemn others who do not think as we do, but we must remember that all of us have been sinners.

**Who eventually will inherit the kingdom that lasts forever? Dan. 7:27.**

The English word "saint" has come to mean someone holy, someone exceptionally meek, charitable, and patient. What did Daniel mean by the word he used? The word that he used has two basic meanings: (1) that which has been separated and (2) spiritual power. In all their relationships God's people are to reflect the image of God. They are what they are, not so much from self-discipline, but because they have accepted the call of God and yielded their lives to Him. God is able to work in and through them.

**Why do you think Daniel still was "troubled" (verse 28) after he had been given the interpretation?**

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Keep this question in mind as we study the rest of the book. The answer will become clearer as we progress in our study.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read pp. 51-55 in the chapter entitled "An Era of Spiritual Darkness," in *The Great Controversy*.

**SUMMARY:** God gave Daniel a vision that would enable him to see that, whereas violence and persecution would increase in the world, God is in control. He is the great Judge who will see to it that truth will triumph in the end. Worldly powers, presented in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar as deteriorating in the maintenance of moral standards, are presented to Daniel as increasing in fierceness and violence. The climax of worldly arrogance is seen in the rise of a little horn that speaks "great things." While terrible things are taking place on earth, a tribunal is being set up in heaven that will judge the things that are happening on the earth according to records that are kept. The arrogant powers of earth will be condemned and destroyed, while the Son of man with the saints will be given an everlasting dominion that will never be destroyed.

**APPLICATION:** Review the indications given in this chapter as to what will be the standards by which all are judged. Do I measure up to these standards? What are some of the things that I still need to overcome by the grace of God?

**NOTES:**

# World Powers Oppose God's Truth

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 8.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The power symbolized by the little horn grows to a great size and dares to raise itself in opposition to the revealed truths of God's plan of salvation. It apparently prospers for a time in its designs, but God's truth will triumph in the end. The period of conflict will be long, but the issue is not in doubt.

## OVERVIEW: Daniel 8

Dan. 8:1-14—The Vision	Dan. 8:15-27—The Interpretation
The ram and the goat—vss. 1-7 The notable horn, the four horns, and the little horn—vss. 8-12 The Bible's longest time prophecy—vss. 13, 14	The source of understanding—vss. 15-19 The powers involved—vss. 20-25 A long time involved—vss. 26-27

**INTRODUCTION:** After receiving the vision recorded in chapter 7, Daniel had troubled thoughts (Dan. 7:28). No doubt the concept of a blasphemous power wearing out the saints upset him. (See verse 25.) Naturally, he would ask, Why does God allow this? But he was wise enough to keep the matter to himself. He did not want to sow seeds of doubt or spread discouragement. Two years after the vision of the four beasts his concerns still were unsolved. How long would the Neo-Babylonian empire last under Nabonidus and his son, Belshazzar?

Meanwhile Daniel could see a rising empire in the East. Although the Medes seemed to be in decline, Persia was rising under a new leader, Cyrus. Daniel was acquainted with Isa. 45:1-6. He must have been quite excited about the new leader because of what Isaiah's prophecy said he would do for Jerusalem and its temple. (See Isa. 44:28.)

It would still be something close to ten years before Babylon would fall, but God graciously revealed to Daniel the high points of the future. God knows the end from the beginning. He is aware of the future rise and fall of nations. In fact,



in spite of sin and the freedom of choice given to all beings, God still controls the final outcome. God's truth will triumph.



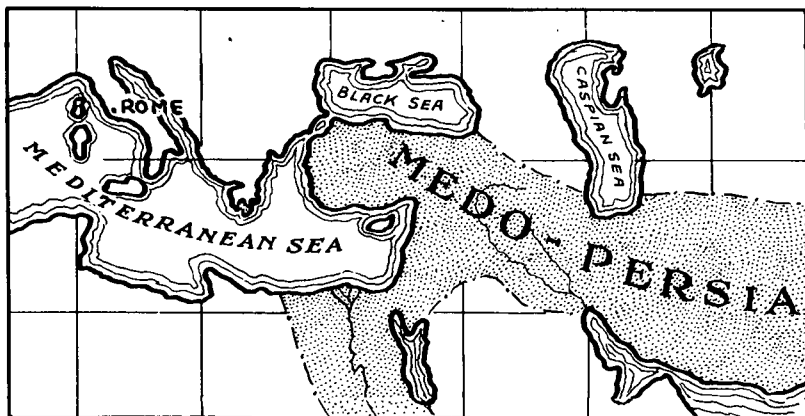
## I. THE VISION (Dan. 8:1-14).

Although there is a clear parallel between the vision of chapter 7 and this chapter, there is an important difference. We can find no reference to Babylon as a world power in this vision.

### 1. The Ram and the Goat (Dan. 8:1-7).

Describe in your own words the first animal Daniel saw, and what the animal was doing. Daniel 8:3, 4.

The ram in the vision represented Medo-Persia. (See verse 20.) In the previous vision, Medo-Persia was represented by a bear. Both animals are strong and can be very aggressive. In the first vision the bear was represented as devouring much flesh (Dan. 7:5). In this vision the ram was pushing in three main directions, and was not being checked in its onward progress. The bear rose up on one side, indicating that Persia would rise above Media. As for the ram, it had one horn higher than the other, the one that had come up last. There thus are some definite parallels between the vision in chapter 7 and the one in chapter 8.



**MAP STUDY:** Note how the Ram (Persia) would be pressing northward into Asia Minor; westward to Babylon and Palestine; and southward to Egypt. You can also see by the extent of the territory covered that the ram had become "great" (Dan. 8:4).

## Lesson 9 - February 28 World Powers Oppose God's Truth

The next animal that came on the scene was a he-goat, which, like the ram, is not a wild animal but symbolizes leadership and aggressiveness.

After reading verses 5-7, describe the activities of the he-goat in your own words.

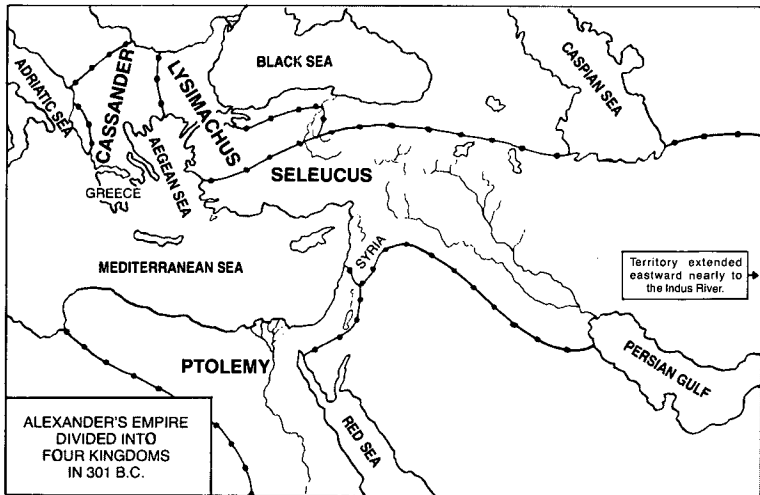


### 2. The Notable Horn, the Four Horns, and the Little Horn (Dan. 8:8-12).

What was the experience of the he-goat after it had overcome the ram?  
Dan. 8:8.

In his turn the he-goat (Greece—see verse 21) became great. But at the height of its power, the horn that was between its eyes (the first king, Alexander), that had caused so much damage to the ram, suddenly was broken, bringing the notable horn to its untimely end.

Four horns took the place of the broken one in the Greek Empire, and spread out in four directions, as illustrated on the map below.



*"Out of one of them."* This expression has caused difficulty because the gender of the pronouns used is opposite to that of horns. Some suggest that *them* may refer to the winds. A careful study of the passage in its context, comparing it with Daniel 2 and 7, strongly suggests that the little horn "represents Rome in

both its phases, pagan and papal. Daniel saw Rome first in its pagan, imperial phase, warring against the Jewish people and the early Christians, and then in its papal phase, continuing down to our own day and into the future, warring against the true church."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 841.

Rome was to the west in relation to Greece. It was to expand toward the south, Egypt; to the east, the Seleucid empire; and to the Holy Land.

**In what other direction was the little horn to attempt to expand? Dan. 8:10-12.**

The horn expanded horizontally in its political power. But not satisfied with that it attempted to expand in a vertical direction. Daniel 8:10 says "to the host of heaven," and Daniel 8:11 says "to the prince of the host." Gerhard Hasel has concluded that "the activity of the little horn power is (1) one of horizontal expansion (possibly also attempting to become strong through idolatrous worship) and (2) persecution of the saints of God on earth."—A. V. Wallenkampf and Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1981), p. 188. In regard to the Prince of the host, Hasel adds: "The verb expresses the notion that the 'little horn' power arrogates to himself prerogatives that belong to none other than the 'prince of the host.'"—*The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, p. 188. The "prince of the host" is identified with Christ.

Another key term is found in Daniel 8:11, 12, namely, "daily." This is taken away from the Prince of the host. The word *daily* literally means "continually," or "continual" or, according to Hasel, "continuance" (*The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, p. 191). Hasel concludes: "The taking away of 'the continuance' refers to the removal of the efficacies of Christ's heavenly ministry by Rome through the introduction of substitute services, thus making ineffective Christ's continual service in behalf of human beings."—*The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, p. 191.

**What do we learn about the little horn's attack on the sanctuary in Daniel 8:11?**

"The 'little horn' power indicates again its anti-God activity which makes ineffective the heavenly place of the sanctuary where Christ ministers in behalf of His people."—*The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, p. 192. This is done "through the establishment of a rival mediatorial system that diverted people's attention from the high priestly work of Christ's intercession, thus depriving them of the blessings of His ministry in the heavenly courts."—*The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, pp. 192, 193.

The great importance of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary may be gathered from the following quotation: "The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time, and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects, and be able to give to everyone that asketh them a reason for the hope that is in them."—Ellen G. White, *Christ and His Sanctuary*, p. 45.

## **Lesson 9 - February 28 World Powers Oppose God's Truth**

How does what the little horn would do relate to the preservation of truth? Dan. 8:12.

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This is a terrible indictment, especially if it is done knowingly and deliberately. It is not for us to judge the motives or actions of others, but it is important for us to know the truth and be sure that we are not being turned aside from it.

### **3. The Bible's Longest Time Prophecy (Dan. 8:13, 14).**

**At this point in the vision, what conversation did Daniel hear between one saint and another? Dan. 8:13, 14.**

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The substitution of a false form of worship to take the place of the true, along with a misleading teaching regarding the plan of salvation and Christ's mediatorial ministry in heaven apparently were to last a long time.

**What was it about the prediction in Daniel 8:13, 14 that seemed to trouble Daniel the most? Verse 26.**

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Based on the Hebrew understanding of the year-day principle it would take a long time (more than 2300 years from his time) before the final vindication of God's truth and God's sanctuary in the judgment would begin. We can well imagine how Daniel was shocked by this announcement of a long period of time during which God's truth would be suppressed and God's people would be under a cloud.



## **II. THE INTERPRETATION (Dan. 8:15-27).**

What a blessing it is that the Bible does not leave us guessing in matters that are important for us!

### **1. The Source of Understanding (Dan. 8:15-19).**

**How did Daniel come to an understanding of the vision he had seen? Dan. 8:15-18.**

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God wants us to be understanding creatures. He wants us to enter into His plans and purposes. We are His friends if we do what He says. (See John 15:14.)

**SEARCH AND LEARN: Who is the Gabriel who is commissioned to explain the vision to Daniel so that he will understand it? What do the following texts indicate about Gabriel?**

Luke 1:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 1:26-35 \_\_\_\_\_

**ILLUMINATION:** "The words of the angel, 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God,' show that he holds a position of higher honor in the heavenly courts."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 99. In fact, he holds the position that Satan once held. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 693.)

It is a privilege to have communications from heaven through the prophets. There are so many things that we do not understand about ourselves and about the way things happen in the world. God has not left us alone with our questions, but in His Word He has revealed to us the principles of His government, and in our daily walk with God we can receive guidance and understanding. (See Matt. 7:7; John 15:7; James. 1:5.)



## **2. The Powers Involved (Dan. 8:20-25).**

The history of the world is a history of political power in conflict. Why is this? Historians suggest a number of factors, such as religion, economics, and geography. More basic reasons are human sinfulness, greed, and thirst for power.

**What two important truths did Gabriel point to as he introduced his explanation of the vision? Dan. 8:19.**

1. There will be a time of indignation and wrath: God cannot let things go on forever as they are. A time of judgment and fiery indignation is sure to come. (See Heb. 10:27.)

2. The vision tells us of events leading up to the end. God has appointed times. He is in control of what is happening on the earth. (See Acts 17:26, 31.)

**REVIEW** the explanation given earlier in the lesson of the **beast and horn symbols.** Note how verses 20-22 make the identification positive.

**What historic power alone can fit the description of the "king of fierce countenance" introduced in verse 23 of this prophecy?**

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The horn that begins little and grows big, extending its power eastward and southward and to the pleasant land, arises toward the end of the reign of the four horns. For that reason it cannot be equated (as sometimes is done) with Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the Seleucid kings, who reigned about the middle of this period of the four horns. Actually Antiochus Epiphanes was too minor a figure to be given much attention at this point in the prophecy. Maintaining the parallel between chapters 2, 7, and 8, the little horn of verse 9 must refer to Rome, the iron monarchy that developed in the west, and expanded eastward.

**How do some of the outstanding characteristics of the power that rises upon the decline of the Grecian empire help identify it as Rome? Dan. 8:23-25.**

*"Fierce countenance."* The government will be oppressive.

*"Understanding dark sentences."* The idea here is that of using ambiguous language, double dealing, and taking advantage of situations for personal profit.

Perhaps we do not wish to get into every detail here, but the picture is not of a

## Lesson 9 - February 28 World Powers Oppose God's Truth

world getting better, but a world getting worse, a world where might is right. It is not surprising that "the holy people" (verse 24) are an object of attack, and so is the "Prince of princes," who is Christ, for the power referred to in this prophecy left behind all Christian principles of truth and righteousness. In these verses Gabriel described Rome in both its pagan and papal aspects. History lets us know that the Bishop of Rome inherited political power when the empire fell before the barbarian invasions. In that sense it continued the Roman civil tradition when Europe was divided into a number of kingdoms and the administration of the empire was transferred to Byzantium.

However, one element of hope can be found: "He shall be broken without hand" (verse 25). God will put an end to all evil machinations. The wicked may seem to prosper for a time, but a reckoning is sure to come.



### 3. A Long Time Involved (Dan. 8:26, 27).

**What was the import of the confirmation made to Daniel in Daniel 8:26?**

The vision of the "evening and morning" refers to the vision of prophetic time in verse 14. Gabriel does not think it is necessary to elaborate on it because it refers to a time period that would go far beyond Daniel's day. "It shall be for many days" (verse 26). In fact, on the principle of a day standing for a year in prophetic time, it would cover the 2300-year period from 457 B.C. to 1844 A.D. (See chart in section II of the next lesson.)

Daniel was told to "shut up" the vision, not in the sense that the entire vision would be sealed so that none would understand it, but with the understanding that parts of the vision would remain sealed until future events would throw light on them. Daniel's reaction indicated strong concern and surprise. What do you think surprised him? Was it the extent of the wickedness that would arise in later years? Was it that God would permit such wickedness to increase and prosper? Was it the length of time that the sanctuary and the host (verse 13) would be trodden under foot? He does not tell us. No doubt the time element would be prominent in his thinking. But he would not know when to begin the calculation. He says that "none understood it," which suggests that those with whom he had shared his vision could not explain the one element that Gabriel had not yet interpreted.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 409, 410, 421, 422.

**SUMMARY:** Again Daniel had been given an outline of future events. The outline would be easy to remember because it was given in pictorial form. As in Daniel 2 and 7, one world empire would succeed another, until a power would arise in direct opposition to God. It would appear to dominate for a while, perhaps even for a long while, but in God's good time its end would come. Evil will be destroyed and good will triumph.

**APPLICATION:** It is for us to be sure that we are on the side of truth and righteousness in every issue. When we are we can be certain that a future of glory is assured to us. In response we need this week to thank God for His revelations, and the manifestation of His grace, and share our assurance with those about us.

# Keys to Understanding

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 9.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart " (Jer. 29:13).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** If we study the Scriptures diligently, pray earnestly for ourselves and for others, and recognize our weaknesses and failures, God will be gracious to us as He was to Daniel, and we will gain confidence in His leading and guidance.

## OVERVIEW: Daniel 9

Verses 1-19 Bible Study and Prayer	Verses 20-27 God Hears and Answers Prayers
Searching the Scriptures— vss. 1, 2 A prayer of confession— vss. 3-15 Intercession for the sanctuary and for God's people—vss. 16-19	An immediate answer to prayer— vss. 20-23 The time element: 70 weeks— vss. 24, 25 The work of the Messiah— vss. 25-27

**INTRODUCTION:** Approximately eleven years had passed since Daniel had been given the vision that he recorded in chapter 8. He had been told, "Shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days" (verse 26). But Daniel still was anxious to understand what the long time period meant. Particularly as they approached the predicted end of the 70 years of captivity he was anxious to learn how and when his people would be released from captivity.

Great changes had taken place since he had the last vision. Babylon no longer existed as a world empire. Medo-Persia had taken over, and Darius the Mede ruled in Babylon. Daniel may have asked himself: What next? What about Jerusalem and the temple? When and how will my people be released from captivity? Although Daniel was a busy man of state, carrying heavy responsibilities, he still had time—and he probably had to make time—to study the Scriptures available to him.



### I. BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER (Dan. 9:1-19).

Summarize what Jesus had to say in Matthew 4:4 about the importance of God's Word.

Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3. The children of Israel had been led out of Egypt and given manna to eat in order that they might learn how dependent they were on God's providences. When we are in favorable circumstances we sometimes forget to seek first the kingdom of God. Then God calls us back to a realization that the material things of life are secondary in importance.

### **1. Searching the Scriptures (Dan. 9:1, 2).**

**Daniel says that he "understood by books" the prophecy he was studying so intently. What book or books of the Bible would he have meant? What sacred writings were available in his day?**

There were the books of Moses, the writings of the prophets such as Samuel, Nathan, and Gad who kept a record of historical events in the experience of Israel. There were court records about the kings and their reigns. Daniel would know quite a bit about the history of his people. There were the writings of prophets living in his time, such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah. He quoted Jeremiah and must have been in close contact with Ezekiel and his prophecies. Ezekiel mentions Daniel in tones of deep respect. (See Eze. 14:14, 20; 28:3.)

**How does Daniel 9:2 illustrate that Daniel recognized that the writings of Jeremiah were inspired?**

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**In what way was Jeremiah's prophecy of special interest to Daniel? Jer. 25:11.**

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Daniel was aware that the 70-year period rapidly was coming to a close. We can understand his concern for the fulfilment of prophecy. But he also was aware of the reason for the captivity and the state of desolation that characterized Jerusalem at that time. (See Jer. 25:8.) Did Daniel also wonder about the relation of the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14, and its relation to Jeremiah's prophecy? We are not told so specifically, but Daniel knew that the time prophecy of Daniel 8 was true (see Dan. 8:26), and that Jeremiah's prophecy came from God. Thus he might well have wondered how the two prophecies could be reconciled.

**In the face of his dilemma, what did Daniel proceed to do? Daniel 9:3.**



### **2. A prayer of confession (Dan. 9:3-15).**

**How was the earnestness and sincerity of Daniel's prayer demonstrated? Daniel 9:3.**

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Daniel's fasting was not undertaken in order to make his prayer more effective. God's ear always is open to our cry. Daniel's fasting grew out of his concern. Probably he was so preoccupied with his praying and seeking to under-



stand God's purposes, that he did not feel hungry, did not want to take time out to eat.

The use of sackcloth and ashes is an Eastern custom to indicate great sorrow. It indicates a lack of concern for personal appearance or comfort.

**READ** what Jesus said about the Christian and his fasting in **Matthew 6:16-18**. Note also what is said about those who are proud of their religious strictness in **Luke 18:11-14**.

**What is significant about how Daniel addressed God in his prayer? Dan. 9:4.**

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For comparison, read Exodus 20:6 and Deuteronomy 7:9. Daniel obviously was acquainted with the writings of Moses.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How do we address God in our prayers and why do we use the form of address that we do? (See Matt. 6:9; John 14:13, 14.)

**Summarize in your own words Daniel's confession recorded in Daniel 9:5-15.**

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Daniel did not adopt a self-righteous stand. Although he had made some important decisions for God in his life, he still recognized that he was dependent upon the Lord for his righteousness. (See Psalm 14:1-3.)

**Daniel was specific in his confession. What fault does he point out in Daniel 9:6?**

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Prophets are servants of God. Yet men and women have been slow to accept the warnings and exhortations of those who have come with messages from God. Why do you think this is so?

**What three characteristics of God did Daniel specifically mention? Dan. 9: 7, 9.**

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**3. Intercession for the Sanctuary and for God's People (Daniel 9:16-19).**

Having confessed his own shortcomings and the sins of his people, Daniel now turns to plead with God to have mercy on Jerusalem, the city where the sanctuary is, and on God's people.

**On what basis did Daniel make his plea for mercy? Dan. 9:16-19.**

"According to all thy righteousness" (verse 16). God's righteousness is not merely an abstract quality of God's being. It is the way that God makes men and women right with Himself—His way of righting wrongs. God had brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand (verse 5). This was a righteous act. Daniel pled that God would again act righteously in restoring true worship in Jerusalem.

"For the Lord's sake" (verse 17). Daniel asked that the captivity and all that it entailed be changed so that God's name would be vindicated. He recognized that the heathen world had a false conception of the power of God. This situation had to be changed, so that the heathen would not suppose that it was by the might of their own gods that they were victorious and that the children of Judah were in captivity.

"For thy great mercies" (verse 18). Daniel's plea was that God be merciful because it is only through His mercy that favor can be shown.

"For thine own sake . . . for thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (verse 19). Again Daniel's plea was based on God doing something to vindicate His name, His character. Our only hope is in God's righteousness, mercy, forgiveness, and willingness to save us from sin.

In his intercessory prayer Daniel threw himself on the mercy of God. It was the only thing he could do. Having done this he was confident that God would not let him or his people down.

**Why does God sometimes seem to take a long time to effect changes? 2 Peter 3:9.**

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Many of us always seem to be in a hurry. We can see things only from our limited perspective. But God sees the larger picture. He knows when it is best to effect changes. Our concept of time is different from God's. We may think that God sometimes is delaying. But actually, God is being merciful, giving everyone ample time to repent and be saved. We should not complain about apparent delays, but be thankful that God knows what is best and is in control.



## II. GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS PRAYERS (Dan. 9:20-27).

One of the blessings of life is that we are not left alone to struggle with difficult situations. We have a God who hears and answers prayers. Pause a moment and recall the instances of answered prayer.

### 1. An Immediate Answer to Prayer (Dan. 9:20-23).

**How swiftly did God make provisions for Daniel's prayer to be answered? Daniel 9:20, 21.**

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Daniel was so impressed with the immediacy of the answer to his prayer that he repeats the expression, "whiles I was speaking." He adds the comment that Gabriel was "caused to fly swiftly." Gabriel says, "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth" (verse 23). God did not wait till the end of the prayer before He took action.

**In respect to prayer, what did Jesus urge His disciples to do? Matt. 7:7. Why do prayers not have to be long? Matt. 6:8.**

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If God knows our every need, why should we pray? It is because of a relationship we enjoy. Just as children go to their earthly parents and express their wishes, even though the parents know very well their needs, so we approach our heavenly Father, not to inform Him, but to express our relationship of love.

Daniel was confident in the presence of the heavenly visitor because he had seen him before. Gabriel on his part seemed to be happy to convey to Daniel the fact that he was "greatly beloved" (Dan. 9:22). Gabriel came to give Daniel "skill and understanding" (Dan. 9:22). What a privilege it is to be taught of God! By contrast, how miserable we feel when we are in the dark and do not understand our situation.



**2. The Time Element: 70 Weeks (Dan. 9:24, 25).**

In the vision of Daniel 8, Daniel had been told of a period of 2,300 day-years. But he had not been told when it would begin, although he was told that at the end of that period the sanctuary would be cleansed. He knew that this part of the vision was true, but that it was "for many days" (Dan. 8:26). He confessed that neither he nor his companions understood it. Then Gabriel came to give Daniel understanding. The understanding to be given had to be about something that had not been previously understood. Note the expression: "Understand the matter and consider the vision" (Dan. 9:23). These words refer to the vision recorded in chapter 8.

**What significant indication did Gabriel give about the time element? Daniel 9:24.**

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The Hebrew word for "determined" appears in post-Biblical Hebrew with the meaning "to cut," or "to cut off." This is its only occurrence in the Bible. Context suggests that the period of 70 weeks was to be cut off from some longer period of time, obviously the 2,300 days of Daniel 8. In this case, the 70 weeks would be the initial section of the 2,300 days. If we know the beginning of one, we know the beginning of the other.

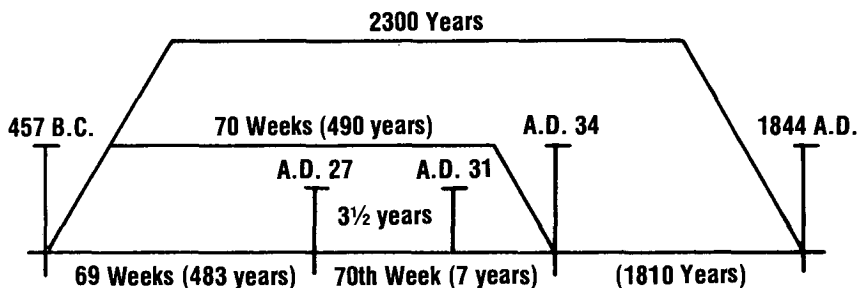
**When was this time element to begin? Daniel 9:25.**

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**READ** Ezra 6:14. Note that the elders of the Jews did their building according to the "commandment of the God of Israel," and the "commandment" of three rulers: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. In other words, a number of forces came together to effect the full rebuilding of Jerusalem, finally coming to fulfillment in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes. According to the *SDA Bible Commentary* this places the date for the beginning of the 2300-year prophecy in the late summer or early fall of 457 B.C. (Vol. 4, p. 853.)

**How long a period of time is to be understood from the expression "seventy weeks"?**

Because a week is composed of seven days, 70 weeks would mean 70 sevens, or 490 days. By applying the prophetic year-day principle, this would mean a period of 490 years. According to research done in recent years by William H. Shea the validity of the year-day principle can be established by three main lines of evidence: "(1) general evidence: suggests that long periods of time were involved in the fulfillment of these prophecies; (2) more specific evidence: indicates that their time elements should be interpreted symbolically rather than literally; (3) most specific evidence: indicates that their symbolic time elements should be interpreted on the basis of a year for a day."—*Symbolic Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*—Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982), p. 56. Dr. Shea goes on to develop 23 biblical reasons why it is valid to assert that a day in symbolic prophecy is the same as a literal year. The application of this principle to prophecies involving such reckoning has proved so satisfactory in fulfillment that many Bible scholars have no question about its validity. By extension, the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 represents a period of 2,300 years.



**What was to be accomplished in the 490-year period? Daniel 9:24.**

Six purposes are mentioned:

1. *To finish the transgression*: the first objective was to give the Jewish people a fair chance to decide whether they would serve God, or their own selfish purposes.
2. *To make an end of sins*: Calvary was the final offering for sin, and the levitical system of sacrifices came to an end.
3. *To make reconciliation for iniquity*: that is, to make an atonement for sin, another result of the cross.
4. *To bring in everlasting righteousness*: when Christ took our place in death, He made it possible for us to have His righteousness by faith.
5. *To seal up the vision and the prophecy*: the fulfillment of the shorter 70-week prophecy would assure the validity of the longer 2300-day prophecy.
6. *To anoint the Most Holy*: to prepare the heavenly sanctuary for Christ's high priestly ministry.



**3. The Work of the Messiah (Dan. 9:25-27).**

The time prophecy in Daniel 9 takes us to the time of Christ's first advent. Gabriel adds the title *Prince* to the title *Messiah*. Jesus is a Prince, a King, and King of kings. (See Rev. 17:14.)

**What striking event did Gabriel say would happen to the Messiah after the 69 weeks? Daniel 9:26, 27.**

This certainly is not what a Jew would expect of a Deliverer. The disciples under Christ's earthly ministry did not anticipate it, although Jesus warned them about His death on a number of occasions. But Jesus fulfilled prophecy.

**What would the Messiah do in the last week, the seventh week; and what is the significance of what would happen in the midst of the week? Daniel 9:27.**

Besides confirming the covenant, the Messiah was to cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. This was effected in symbolism when, as Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the temple that separated the Holy from the Most Holy place was torn from top to bottom, a graphic indication that the sacrificial system had come to an end (see Matt. 27:51) and that the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary was about to begin.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled "The Kingdom of God Is at Hand" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 231-235.

**SUMMARY:** Daniel had been confused by the time prophecy of the longer 2,300 days recorded in Daniel 8:14. Searching the Scriptures for an answer, he could only find Jeremiah's prophecy and added details that would surround the coming and the death of the Messiah at a specific point in time.

**APPLICATION:** God is not far from any one of us. But because of sin we are far away from Him. However, if we diligently seek to know Him and His plans for us, He will graciously reveal Himself to us. Note the promise in 1 John 1:7. How will you relate to this promise this coming week?

**NOTES:**

# Michael, Your Prince

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 10.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** In His love for Daniel, God gave him another vision. Daniel was shown that, even in circumstances where we see nothing happening, the forces of heaven are working for the accomplishment of God's purposes. When "the curtain is drawn aside, . . . we behold, behind, above, . . . the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."—*Education*, p. 173.

Daniel 10: The Introduction to Daniel's Last Vision	
Vss. 1-9 Christ Appears to Daniel	Vss. 10-21 Gabriel Speaks to Daniel
Daniel's fast (vss. 1-3) Christ reveals Himself (vss. 4-6) Daniel alone sees the vision (vs. 7) Daniel's reaction to Christ's presence (vss. 8, 9)	Comforts Daniel (vss. 10, 11) Explains purpose (vss. 12-14) Daniel's reaction to Gabriel's presence (vss. 15-17) Gabriel sets the stage for the vision to follow (vss. 18-21)

**INTRODUCTION:** Although two years or more had passed since his previous vision, Daniel was troubled at this point in his experience and mourned for three full weeks (Dan. 10:2). Why was he mourning? Could it be that the crisis his people were undergoing in getting ready to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem was weighing heavily on his mind and heart? If so, it shows that Daniel had a tremendous concern for his people. When we see the church failing in its responsibilities, or prominent leaders falling by the wayside, do we feel righteously indignant, or do we mourn? Do we rise up and criticize, or do we pray for forgiveness? Do we feel, as Daniel did, that what happens to the church happens to us?

It was because of Daniel's concern that the vision we will study this week was given him.



## I. CHRIST APPEARS TO DANIEL (Dan. 10:1-9).

John the Revelator had a vision of Christ which he described at the beginning of his book (Rev. 1:13-15). It was not the Christ of Nazareth, veiled in human flesh, but the Christ who had been glorified.

Similarly, Daniel had a vision of Christ in His glory. In the same way that Christ appeared to John to authenticate his visions and give courage to the aged apostle, Christ appeared to Daniel to assure him of a heavenly presence and of divine control.

### **1. Daniel's Fast and His Last Vision (Dan. 10:1-3).**

**Summarize in your own words the immediate circumstances of Daniel's last vision. Daniel 10:1-4.**

In the third year of Cyrus, Daniel would be approximately 88 years of age. That might be one reason why he had not returned to Jerusalem under the decree issued by Cyrus in his first year of rulership. Yet Daniel would be following closely the response of his people to Cyrus's decree. Perhaps he was concerned about the lack of response on the part of so many.

**What three things did Daniel want his readers to be aware of about this vision? Dan. 10:1.**

1. It was \_\_\_\_\_
2. The time was \_\_\_\_\_
3. He \_\_\_\_\_ it.

The fact that the vision is true is not surprising to one who believes that God can and does communicate with people. The statement is perhaps for those who doubt. It is an assertion that demands a response; either the truth is accepted or rejected. If it is rejected, the person rejecting must bear the responsibility. Neither is the fact that it covers a long period of time and gives us the outline of a great conflict surprising to those who live in our present age and know of the long history of the great controversy.

The fact that Daniel claimed that he understood it shows that understanding is possible. The study of prophecy is not a futile task; there may be parts that are not yet discerned clearly, but the general principle of the triumph of truth and righteousness is unmistakable.

Predictive prophecy is outside the range of human capability, but it is not impossible with God. His omniscience includes a knowledge of the future that mystifies the human mind because it finds it difficult to grasp how there can be foreknowledge without predestination. But this is a mystery like other mysteries that must be apprehended by faith.

**When and where was Daniel's last vision given? Dan. 10:1-4.**

Daniel is quite specific as to the day and the month, but because we cannot be sure whether he is using Babylonian or Jewish reckoning the year may be 536 or 535 B.C. In any case, his mourning must have taken place during the Passover Feast. Whether the feast was observed by the Jews in exile is not known, but a devout person such as Daniel would not have forgotten it. The Passover celebrated the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. It is likely that Daniel was wishing that the exiles might also celebrate their deliverance from the domi-

nation of their captors. But he also would be aware that God cannot deliver people who are not willing to be delivered. Many of the Jews who had settled in the land of their exile, had acquired property and position, and were not prepared to undertake the dangerous journey to Jerusalem.

The vision was given Daniel when he was at the Hiddekel (Tigris) River.



## 2. Christ Reveals Himself (Dan. 10:4-6).

What Daniel saw as he lifted his eyes heavenward was the second person of the Godhead revealing Himself.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Compare the description of what Daniel saw with the vision of John the Revelator. Daniel 10: 5, 6; Rev. 1:13-15.

Daniel	Revelation
A certain man	vs. 13 _____
Clothed in linen	vs. 13 _____
Loins girded with fine gold	vs. 13 _____
Eyes as lamps of fire	vs. 14 _____
Feet like polished brass	vs. 15 _____
Voice of a multitude	vs. 15 _____

**Study the vision of God described in Ezekiel 1:26-28. What do you recognize as similar to the description found in Daniel 10?**

A body like beryl, a face like lightning, eyes like lamps of fire, and limbs like polished brass, all indicate a supernatural being. Have you noticed that the face is the most important part of the appearance of anyone; that in the face, the eyes catch the most attention? Flashing light and flames of fire suggest activity, so that the Being seen in the vision was not like a statue. He was alive. He also must be powerful, for lightning involves a massive force of electricity, and fire is destructive of everything that is not as pure as gold. Being in such a Presence can be frightening.

Add to all this a voice that sounds like the deep rolling voice of a multitude, and the question is: Can any human being stand before such a Person?

## 3. Daniel Alone Sees the Vision (Dan. 10:7, 8).

**Why do you think the vision affected Daniel's companions in the way described in Daniel 10:7?**

We are not told whether the people who were with Daniel were fellow Jews or not. In any case, they did not see the vision, but they felt a presence. It was a presence that frightened them to the extent that they ran to hide themselves.



**4. Daniel's Reaction to Christ's Presence (Dan. 10:9).**

**Why did a godly man like Daniel react as he did? What was the reaction of John the Revelator when he saw a vision similar to the one seen by Daniel? Revelation 1:17.**

Sin makes human beings unworthy to stand before a holy God. When we compare ourselves with others we may feel quite good. (Such a comparison always is dangerous. (See 2 Cor. 10:12.) But when we stand before God we immediately are aware of our unworthiness.

**II. GABRIEL SPEAKS TO DANIEL (Dan. 10:10-21).**

Although Daniel reacted to the vision as any other godly person might, he was not in a posture conducive to receiving the instruction and inspiration that he needed. The angel Gabriel (see Dan. 8:16; 9:21) was sent to set matters right.

**1. Gabriel Comforts Daniel (Dan. 10).**

**As Daniel was lying prostrate on the ground in a deep sleep but hearing the words of the one who was speaking to him, what did the angel do and what was the significance of his act? Daniel 10:10.**

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Do we realize the effect of a touch? If human touch can be comforting and healing, what about an angel's touch? But the angel did more for Daniel; he spoke to him.

The hand that touched Daniel set him on his hands and knees. It may be human to fall prostrate before a heavenly being, but when the heavenly being has a message to give, it is no longer appropriate for a human being to remain in an abject posture.

**What was most comforting about the assurance the angel brought Daniel? Daniel 10:11.**

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Daniel was told that he was a man "highly esteemed" (NIV). This must have encouraged him to feel that he had nothing to fear. Daniel had been told this before (see Dan. 9:23), but he needed to be assured of this again. All heaven is interested in encouraging, not discouraging.

Gabriel informed Daniel that he had a message for him from heaven. He urged him to stand up. Although still trembling, Daniel did so.

**2. Gabriel Explains His Purpose for Coming (Dan. 10:12-14).**

**How long did it take for Daniel's prayer to reach the heavenly courts? What were the concerns of that prayer? Daniel 10:12.**

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*"From the first day."* There is no delay in reaching heaven. The astronomer

may cause us to wonder at the vast distances between the earth and the planets. The psalmist may be impressed with his smallness in relation to the universe. (See Ps. 8:4.) But there are two truths that we must keep in mind: (1) that heaven is very near to every one of us, and (2) that God is ready to come to the aid of the least of His saints.

Daniel set his heart to understand. As children of God we want to know and understand. Doing so involves time and energy, study and concentration. We must set aside time for Bible study.

God is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. He has spoken to us through His messengers, the prophets, and especially through His Son. When we are thirsty we seek for a good source of waters, not for empty cisterns. (See Jer. 2:13.) How, then, can we explain why so many seem to go anywhere and everywhere for their answers except to the Bible and to those who preach from the Bible?



**Daniel 10:12 speaks of Daniel chastening or humbling himself. What does this mean?**

*Here are some suggestions:*

- He recognized that as a human being he could not know all the circumstances involved in any situation. Therefore he could not hope to understand fully why God acted as He did.
- He knew that as a human being there could be many things that it would be best for him not to know. He could not expect God to tell him everything!
- He recognized that God does not treat us as servants, but as friends. He does let us know as much of His plans and purposes as He sees that it is best for us to know.

**What can we learn from the fact that, while Daniel was praying, significant events were taking place in the kingdom of Persia? Daniel 10:13.**

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If the answer to Daniel's prayer had been delayed three weeks, it was not because of distance involved or because of lack of desire to give an answer; it was because of an important activity that took precedence over everything else. This verse indicates a kind of activity that even now could be taking place in many centers of government. It pulls a curtain aside and permits us to see that unseen forces are at work to bring about desired ends. These forces may be good or evil. Men may think that they are independent in action, but the fact is that they are often urged one way or another by the forces of good and evil.

**ILLUMINATION:** "While Satan was striving to influence the highest powers in the kingdom of Medo-Persia to show disfavor to God's people, angels worked in behalf of the exiles. The controversy was one in which all heaven was interested. Through the prophet Daniel we are given a glimpse of this mighty struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus; and before the conflict closed, Christ Himself came to Gabriel's aid. . . . All that heaven could do in behalf of the people of God was

done. The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses, who reigned about seven and a half years.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 571, 572.

The surprising element in the story is the length of time that it took to persuade Cyrus to do what he ought to do. We think of God as all powerful. Can He not secure results quicker than this? He could, if He were arbitrary in His control. The amazing revelation made in the Bible is that God has given humanity free will. He never violates that freedom. With remarkable patience He puts up with our waywardness.

There also is wisdom in delay. As a result of the millennia of conflict between good and evil it is obvious that sin must be destroyed. When sin is seen as it truly is with all its disastrous consequences, no one will be attracted to it or want to see it prevail. When God in His righteousness destroys the devil and all those who take his side, there will be a mighty sigh of relief. God will be praised for His goodness and love (Rev. 7:12; 11:17, 18; 12:10-12; 16:5, 6).

**Who is the Michael of Daniel 10:13? Dan. 12:1; John 5:27, 28; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7.**

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“The name Michael . . . is used only in instances where Christ is in direct conflict with Satan. The name in Hebrew, signifying ‘who is like God?’ is at once a question and a challenge. In view of the fact that Satan’s rebellion is essentially an attempt to install himself on the throne of God and ‘be like the most High’ (Isa. 14:14), the name Michael is a most fitting one for him who has undertaken to vindicate the character of God and disprove Satan’s claims.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 860.

 **For how long is the vision to be relevant? Daniel 10:14.**

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If Daniel had thought that the conflict between truth and error, between God’s people and the heathen, between true and false worship, was soon to end, he would now be disillusioned. How often our concerns are limited to our own times, our own generation! But the scope of the plan of salvation is vast. We must learn to accept God’s perspective, to recognize that many more are involved in the conflict than ourselves. Only thus can we be saved from the disappointments of apparent delays.

**3. Daniel’s Reaction to Gabriel’s Presence (Dan. 10:15-17).**

**What happened to Daniel when he saw Gabriel? How was the problem resolved? Verses 15-17.**

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Daniel apparently was sick at heart as he began to realize that the vision he was receiving had to do with events in the long future. He bowed his head and became speechless (v. 15). Then the angel touched his lips and he was able to

describe his disappointed feelings (v. 16). How often have we allowed disappointments to frustrate us and make us helpless, even to the extent of being breathless? (v. 17). But in our moments of greatest weakness, God is present to give us strength for the duties of life ahead of us. We must never doubt His wisdom or love.

#### 4. Gabriel Sets the Stage for the Vision to Follow (Dan. 10:18-21).

**What further insight was Daniel given regarding the activity of the angel? Daniel 10: 20, 21; 11:1.**

Once again Daniel was assured that he was "greatly beloved," not because of his weaknesses and strength, but because of being a child of God. God loves us because He is our Creator, our heavenly Father, and He loves us whether we are near or far. That truth should give us confidence, and help us respond in appreciation, love, and obedience.

Gabriel had many duties to perform. Daniel was precious to God, but he must not make unnecessary selfish demands. It is not that God is limited in what He can do. But we must learn to bide our time, to trust in His care, and to let God work out His purposes without insisting that He must do what we think needs to be done. We are told that God will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness (Rom. 9:28). It is not for us to fret and fume because things do not go our way, and people refuse to do what we command.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study the following passages to learn more about God's care for you:

Deut. 31:6

Eph. 3:20

Ps. 34:15; 46:1

Phil. 4:19

Isa. 43:2

Heb. 13:5, 6

Matt. 6:25-30

1 Pet. 5:7

**SUMMARY:** In this lesson we have seen how a prophet in Babylon was concerned that God's will should be accomplished. He fasted and prayed for three full weeks. God graciously revealed Himself in the person of Michael or Christ, to assure him of God's love and esteem. But heavenly forces always are at work in the halls of government, seeking to work things out in the interests of God's people. It takes time, because God respects the wills of even wicked men. But we need never let delay worry us, or adverse circumstances frustrate us. The outcome is never in doubt.

**APPLICATION:** In view of what we have studied this week, what kind of Christians ought we to be? How can we best witness to others that we trust God with all that we have and all that we are?

**NOTES:**

# A Prophecy Without Symbols

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 11:1-39.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "The Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:2, 3).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** There comes a time when heresy and blasphemy can no longer be tolerated. When God steps in, both His character and His saints will be vindicated.

## OVERVIEW: Dan. 11:1-39

Human Conflict	God's Faithful People
Medo-Persia—vss. 1, 2 Greece—vss. 3-13 Rome and the mystery of iniquity—vss. 14-39	They know their God—vs. 32 They understand and teach—vs. 33 They are helped and purified—vss. 33-35

**INTRODUCTION:** In Daniel 11:1 Gabriel informed Daniel of another aspect of his activity. In the days of Darius the Mede the angel had been sent to support the king against the prejudice and opposition that had arisen because of the king's favorable attitude to the Jews. Darius's decree, recorded in Daniel 6:25-27, could not have been popular in a predominantly heathen land. Gabriel let Daniel know that Heaven had been working for the interests of God's people, even though many of them may not have been aware of it.

Gabriel then gave Daniel a more detailed outline than he had previously been given of what was to take place in the future. This time the kinds of symbols used in previous visions were not used. Kings were referred to as persons, and they went about their activities in the way that rulers usually do. Is this easier to understand? That remains to be seen. Animal symbols, however strange, may be much more easily remembered than a series of battles between powers to the north and south of the Holy Land. But Inspiration has used this method here for a purpose.

As in previous revelations, Daniel was given a review of what he had already learned, that the Medo-Persian empire would be succeeded by Greece. But this

time he learned of three kings, and a fourth, who would be very rich and would stir up Persia against Greece. Each prophecy adds something to the development that was not known before. The Grecian empire would come to a sudden end. Then there would be a series of struggles between the rulers of the north and south. What would be the end? Michael would stand up. (See Dan. 12:1.)



## I. HUMAN CONFLICT (Dan. 11:1-45).

A cursory reading of chapter 11 shows that the main opponents are the powers of the north and the powers of the south. What needs to be remembered is that the Holy Land, being in the middle, cannot avoid being caught up in the contest. Daniel would be aware of this. His concern for his people and the Temple at Jerusalem would mean that he would listen to the account of strife with great anxiety; not because he would be concerned about the fate of either the king of the north or the south, but because he knew that his people would be at the center of the conflict.

### 1. Medo-Persia (Dan. 11:1, 2).

**How many more kings would arise in Medo-Persia? What would be the characteristic of the fourth? What would be his major policy? Daniel 11:2.**

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Commentators agree that the fourth king was Xerxes, called Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther. That would mean that the three kings preceding him, (apart from Cyrus who already was reigning at the time of the vision) would be Cambyses the son of Cyrus, the False Smerdis, and Darius the Great.

This vision was given to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus (Dan. 10:1). Therefore, it is not surprising that Babylon is not mentioned. Neither is it surprising that the vision would go over in more detail some of the matters revealed previously. The prophecies of Daniel go back over the main lines of history, each vision adding features not revealed before. As more detail is given the precise fulfillment becomes more and more remarkable. These events were future to Daniel's time. Only God could give such a revelation.

History tells us that Darius the Great attacked Greece, but was checked at the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. Ten years later Xerxes, with a gigantic fleet and over one hundred thousand men, once again led the Persians onto Greek soil. But the Greek cities rallied to the threat. When the Persian fleet was destroyed in the Bay of Salamis (480 B.C.), and the army was defeated in the Battle of Plataea in 479 B.C., the Persian threat was ended forever. The way was open for the counterattack that came when Alexander took over the reins of government.

### 2. Greece (Dan. 11: 3-13).

**What aspects of the reign of Alexander are described in this prophecy? Notice the details of how the general would come to his end and what would happen to his empire. Dan. 11:3, 4.**

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Alexander's conquests were remarkably swift. They also were uniquely extensive. Having defeated Persian forces in Asia Minor Alexander seized Tyre

and Egypt. He then extended his reach, almost without restriction, as far as India and made his headquarters in Babylon. But his rule was short-lived. He died unexpectedly at the age of 33. After his death his realm fell prey to his greedy officers. The contest finally developed into a battle between the Seleucid rulers to the north of the Jewish state and the Ptolemies to the south. (See Dan. 11:5-13.)

History was to confirm the words of Scripture with remarkable accuracy. It is no wonder that those who deny the supernatural want to place the writing of the book of Daniel in the second century B.C. and suggest that the book was history written in the form of prophecy. However, the book of Daniel gives every evidence of having been written in the sixth century B.C. Prophecy not only is a possibility; it is an actuality, a sure ground for trust and confidence in the God whom we worship.



### 3. Rome and the Mystery of Iniquity (Dan. 11:14-39).

Although commentators differ as to when Rome appears as a power in the prophecy of Daniel 11, they generally agree that Daniel 11:5-14 refers to conflicts between the Ptolemies in the south and the Seleucids in the north. Because Rome features in the previous visions of Daniel as coming after Greece, we would expect Rome to be mentioned in this prophecy. Some Adventist students of this prophecy see Rome appearing for the first time in verse 16 but the *SDA Bible Commentary* seems to favor the position that Rome is mentioned in verse 14 as the “robbers of thy people” (vol. 4, p. 869). Our design in this brief study is to give the overall perspective and to leave the specifics for deeper study. Although we will not deal with the specific application of every detail of these prophecies we should look at some meaningful phrases, and try to understand them:

*A raiser of taxes* (Dan. 11:20). Many commentators consider this is a reference to Caesar Augustus. If this is so, we certainly have come to a point in the prophecy which refers to Rome. (See Luke 2:1.)

*A vile person* (Dan. 11:21). It is believed that this is a reference to the emperor Tiberius during whose reign Christ was crucified. It was said of him that he was “an eccentric, misunderstood, and unloved person.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 870. However, other commentators would attach the term to the medieval papacy. (See Maxwell, C.M., *God Cares* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1981], p. 283.)

*Prince of the covenant* (Dan. 11:22). Undoubtedly this is Jesus Christ who was to “confirm the covenant with many for one week.” Daniel 9:27. Jesus was born in the days of the Romans (see Luke 2:1-7) and was crucified under Pontius Pilate (See Luke 23:24).

*The end shall be at the time appointed* (Dan. 11:27). This expression emphasizes that God has a timetable. Nothing takes place before its time. The expression is repeated in verse 29. History may seem to be a random set of circumstances, determined by the laws of cause and effect, but the Bible reminds us that there is One who is in control. Nothing *against the holy covenant* (Dan. 11:28). Can you imagine how anyone can be opposed to a holy covenant? What do you understand by “Holy covenant”? What is God’s new covenant? (See Jer. 31:31-33.) Daniel refers to those who “forsake the covenant” (Dan. 11:30).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Is it not amazing that people can be so willful as to go their own way and refuse to be guided by God’s law? Why is this so?

Paul taught that the Christians of his day were not to expect the second coming of Jesus until "that man of sin be revealed" (2 Thess. 2:3). Another term he used for this power is "mystery of iniquity" (verse 7).



**What characteristics identify this power that would arise after the gospel age and before the second coming of Jesus? 2 Thess. 2:3-10.**

Paul says that there will be a "rebellion" before the second coming of Christ. It will be headed by "the man of lawlessness" (verse 3, RSV), one who is "doomed to perdition" (verse 3, NEB). He claims many of the prerogatives of God. This language reminds us of Daniel 11:36, and suggests that Paul and Daniel are referring to the same phenomenon. It was to appear after the apostolic age. Paul says: "Let no one deceive you" (2 Thess 2:3). Daniel says the people who know their God "shall stand firm" (11:32, RSV). We need not be deceived by the "mystery of iniquity" because we have been forewarned.

Paul says that the lawless one will be destroyed by the second coming of Jesus. (See 2 Thess. 3:8.) But in the meantime this "mystery of iniquity" opposes every god, whether real or unreal, tears down every object of true worship, and exalts himself higher than any other being. He even sits in the place dedicated to the worship of God as though he were God Himself.

**Why must we be on our guard constantly in these last days of time to keep from being deceived by subtle philosophies that undermine the moral truths established by God's law? Matt. 24:24.**

**What terminology that Daniel used was repeated by Jesus when He warned the disciples about the future? Daniel 11:31; Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14. In what way does His use demonstrate that this prophecy applies after His day?**

It is to be noted that Jesus refers to the abomination that brings desolation as occurring future to His time. That means that those who would apply this prophecy to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes are not allowing Scripture to interpret itself. Matthew 24 contains prophecies that have an obvious dual application, applying to the time of the fall of Jerusalem as well as to later events. The papacy was not only to usurp the prerogatives of true worship but also would become a persecuting power, as church history attests. In that sense it is prefigured in this prophecy.

Jesus did have the destruction of Jerusalem in mind when He warned the disciples of future difficulties. He was specific in indicating that those "in Judea" should flee to the mountains. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark indicate that the prophecy of Daniel needs to be studied and understood. There would be more than one occasion when the evil one would take over the reins of government and God's people would be advised to flee.





## II. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE OVERCOMERS (Dan. 11:32-35).

Although the prospects of a world that has forsaken truth and righteousness is frightening, God's people are not dismayed.

### 1. They Know Their God (Dan. 11:32).

**While many will be deceived and corrupted with flatteries, what is it that will enable the faithful to remain strong and firm in their convictions? Compare Dan. 11:32 with John 17:3.**

Consider the following truths:

1. To know God is not merely to know about God. We may know many things about God, as Satan and his evil angels do, but that knowledge by itself can only make us tremble. (See James 2:19.)

2. We may know all that God requires us to know, and yet not know God in a personal sense. On the contrary, those who know their God are those who have made a full commitment to Him and have accepted all of God's expressed will as their standard of conduct.

**REVIEW how, in the incident recorded in Daniel 1, young Daniel refused to be defiled by anything that might be served at the king's table.**

Those totally committed to God would rather die than worship a false God. Following Daniel's example, they agonize with God in prayer and know what it means to receive answers. They have felt the power of God in their lives—the power of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification.

**THINK IT THROUGH: What other characteristics of those who know their God can you think of?**

**ILLUMINATION:** "Amid the gloom that settled upon the earth during the long period of papal supremacy, the light of truth could not be extinguished. In every age there were witnesses for God—men who cherished faith in Christ as the only mediator between God and man, who held the Bible as the only rule of life, and who hallowed the true Sabbath. How much the world owed to these men, posterity will never know. They were branded as heretics, their motives impugned, their characters maligned, their writings suppressed, misrepresented or mutilated. Yet they stood firm, and from age to age maintained their faith in its purity, as a sacred heritage for the generations to come."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 61.



### 2. They Understand and Teach (Dan. 11:33).

Life can be full of questions: Why are we here? What are we heading for? We cannot be satisfied to live in a state of ignorance.

**If we are seeking answers to life's questions, where do we go for information? If we already have found the answers to life's questions, what obligation do we have to those who still do not know the answers? Daniel 11:33.**

Christians have a source of information that is invaluable—the Word of God. It tells us where we came from and where we are going. It tells us what we must do if we desire life. It tells us how we can have wisdom—we are to ask God for it. (See James 1:5, 6.)

The wise man stresses the importance of wisdom this way: “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Prov. 4:7). The psalmist says that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 111:10). Jesus contrasted the wise and the foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. He urged that all should watch, because there is one thing that no one knows—that is the time of Christ’s coming.

Those who are wise do not selfishly keep their wisdom to themselves. They share it with others. It was God’s plan and purpose that the children of Israel would share their laws with others. Then the nations would say: “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deut. 4:6). God is glorified when His people are blessed because they know and keep His commandments.

### 3. They Are Helped and Purified (Dan. 11:33-35).

**What does Daniel say will happen to God’s people when they pass through bitter persecution? Daniel 11:33-35.**

God’s people are not promised a bed of roses. Persecution will involve real hardship. Yet in their deepest trials they will not be left alone. (See Matt. 28:20.) Daniel says that they will receive some help. What kind of help do you suppose this will be? How did Jesus feel when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane? In the case of the disciples Jesus recognized that the “Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). We need always to watch and pray, for we never know when we shall find ourselves in trying circumstances. One thing is certain. Persecution brings a great test, and those who survive it are purified. The proper response to persecution is not to complain or find fault, not to resist and curse, but to bless those who are so cruel and unjust. (See Rom. 12:14.)



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** What do the passages that follow teach us about knowing God better? Deut. 4:29; Job 22:21; 2 Pet. 3:18?

**SUMMARY:** The eleventh chapter of Daniel is perhaps the most fascinating and most challenging of the chapters in Daniel for us to study. Next week we will study verses 40-45, much of which must be considered unfulfilled prophecy. To attempt to explain all the details of unfulfilled prophecy can only lead into speculation. Commenting on the speculation involved in interpreting these verses in Daniel 11, James White wrote: “Here we should tread lightly, and take position carefully, lest we be found removing the landmarks fully established in the Advent movement.”—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 29, 1871. The revelations of difficult times ahead should not surprise us. They warn us that we must not be carried away by miracles, flatteries, or false pretensions.

**APPLICATION:** Should we not pray that God will make us faithful witnesses for Him wherever He has placed us? Take time to pray for yourself and your family as you look to the future.

# The Time of the End

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Daniel 11:40—12:13.



**MEMORY TEXT:** “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** How we would like to gaze into God’s crystal ball, and figure out the future! But prophecy is not given to satisfy curiosity. Prophecy is best understood after it has been fulfilled. Nevertheless, we should keep our eyes and ears open, and watch the scenes taking place around us in order to see how God is working to bring about earth’s coming climax.

## OVERVIEW: Dan. 11:40—12:13

The Time of the End—11:40-45	The Great Deliverance—12:1-13
1. Kings north and south 2. Countries involved 3. The end of the conflict	1. Michael and the time of trouble 2. Two resurrections 3. Epilogue

**INTRODUCTION:** A remarkable amount of detail can be found in Daniel’s last prophetic vision that began in chapter 10. Those who study history carefully will be able to follow the marvelous fulfillment of these prophetic statements. But the end must come, and in this lesson we see who, where, and what are the factors and elements in the closing scenes of history.

Ever since the fall of our first parents we have seen the conflict between truth and error, those who are on God’s side and those who have chosen to oppose God. At times the forces have seemed unequal, and the forces of evil seem to have prevailed. But God still is in control. Although He is patient with evildoers, He has a timetable. The time will come when sin and sinners will be destroyed. We now study what the end events will be and what the final outcome will involve.



### I. THE TIME OF THE END (Dan. 11:40-45).

What warning did Jesus give about times and seasons? Matt. 24:33; Mark 13:28; Acts 1:7.

We often are anxious to know exactly when something will happen, but such knowledge is not always best for us. We have been told to watch for signs, and from the signs we may judge when an event is near.

The fact that we do not know when an event will take place does not mean that God does not know. In the book of Daniel it has been made clear that God has plans and purposes that He is working out with great patience.

### **1. Kings North and South (Dan. 11:40).**

The last direct reference in this prophecy to the kings of the North and South was in Daniel 11:15. As we come to the end of time, they are mentioned again.

#### **Who initiates the attack, and what is the success of the counterattack? Daniel 11:40.**

Commentators are not agreed as to the identity of these two kings. Uriah Smith associated the king of the North with Turkey and the king of the South with Egypt. He saw the fulfillment of these verses in the political conflicts involving France, Turkey and Egypt after 1798. James White and many current Adventist scholars associate the king of the North with the Papacy, drawing a parallel between the king of the North and the little horn power of Daniel 7.

One thing is certain, nothing is gained by dogmatism and controversy. In such areas of unfulfilled prophecy we must tread humbly and softly. It is our responsibility to study the Scriptures for ourselves, to ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to submit our understandings to those in the church who are able to judge our findings, and then to abide by the decisions of the church in order to maintain the unity of the church. Whoever may be the kings of North and South, it is obvious that they are in conflict. There is attack and counterattack. That reminds us that Jesus said there would be wars and rumors of wars. (See Matt. 24:6.) As long as there is sin in the world there will be greed and thirst for power.

Jesus also said that there would be false christs in the time of the end. (See Matt. 24:23, 24.) We may expect to live in times when there will be religious controversy and many Satanic deceptions.

#### **What is the only safeguard against deception? 2 Peter 1:19; 3:17, 18.**



### **2. Countries Involved and Aligned (Dan. 11:41-43).**

The prophecy is very specific regarding countries that are involved in the conflict, although the countries mentioned may have symbolic meaning in our time.

#### **What are the countries or peoples that are named as being involved in the conflict between the two kings? Dan. 11:41-43.**

The "glorious land" is invaded. The "fairest of all lands" (NEB). "The Promised Land" (GNB). Most commentators agree that this is the land that was promised to the children of Israel, a land "flowing with milk and honey."

It is because the Holy Land is mentioned in this closing prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel that the Middle East must always be a subject of interest to Bible students. Can we link what happens there with the prophecies of Daniel? Who is the invader? Perhaps we see in this prophecy that there will never be peace in the Middle East. It will always be an area of contention.

Three peoples are mentioned who live on the other side of the Jordan: Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon.

**Edom**, the land of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, lies to the south-east of the Dead Sea. The capital was Sela, otherwise known as Petra, or “the rose-red city half as old as time.” Those who have visited the place have been impressed with its rocky formations.

**Moab**, the land of the Moabites, is east of the Dead Sea and north of Edom. Balak, king of Moab, asked Balaam to curse the children of Israel as they were approaching the promised land. It was when the children of Israel settled close to the Moabites that they were seduced by Moabite women to worship idols.

**Ammon and Ammonites.** These were people who lived north of the Moabites and were east of the river Jordan. Their capital was Amman, a city that survives to this day. They were associated with the Moabites in inviting Balaam to curse the children of Israel.

The last three areas listed above are united today under the rule of the king of Jordan. In Daniel’s prophecy these three areas “escape” out of the hand of the king of the North. Here is a factor that must be taken into consideration when seeking a fulfillment of the prophecy. Why would these territories “escape”?

Two other territories are mentioned in this prophecy: Libya and Ethiopia. Libya lies west of Egypt in North Africa. Libya is identified in the Bible with Put or Phut, the son of Ham. The Biblical Ethiopia is the country of Cush, a son of Ham. It lies in the upper reaches of the Nile south of Egypt, including part of what now is Egypt and part of Sudan.

According to Daniel’s prophecy both these territories, Libya and Ethiopia are to be involved in the fulfillment.

### **3. The End of the Conflict (Dan. 11:44, 45).**

Every series of events has its logical conclusion. This series of conflicts also have their end.

**What causes the “king of the north” to gather great fury? What will he do, and how does he come to his end? Dan. 11:44, 45.**

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In interpreting prophecy that is to be fulfilled in the future we cannot be dogmatic. Nevertheless it is important to know what factors to look for and how to evaluate any suggestions for fulfillment. We do well therefore to be acquainted with the details, so that we shall not be led astray by false solutions, or false interpretations.

One of the factors to look for is “tidings from the east and north” (verse 44, RSV). From the standpoint of the Holy Land invading armies came from the north, although their origin was sometimes from Babylon, geographically in the east. The sixth plague involves the drying up of the river Euphrates to prepare the way for the “kings of the east.” (See Rev. 16:12.)

The “king of the north” plants the “tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain.” Many feel that this is a reference to Jerusalem. At the present time Jerusalem is the holy city of three religions. Our eyes are on Jerusalem, not only because of its historical connections, but because of this event that will usher in the end. Contrary to all normal developments, the power

that in the future will set itself up in Jerusalem will come to its end and there will be none who can come to the rescue. Bible scholars everywhere are watching to see what will happen next in the Middle East. As soon as such an event takes place as the setting up of headquarters in Jerusalem, we may expect the final winding up of earth's history. The name Jerusalem means "city of peace." Could it be that a false prince of peace will seek to take over what belongs to the true Prince of Peace? It is true that the world is longing for peace. But only too often the world follows the wrong pathway to peace. Peace is not gained by the dominance of power. Peace can be gained only with the knowledge of sins forgiven, and by accepting in the life the only one who can bring peace, Jesus Christ. (See John 14:27.)



## II. THE GREAT DELIVERANCE (Dan. 12:1-13).

Although history is full of wars and conflicts, Daniel's prophecies reveal that there will be a conflict to the end of time. However, the time is sure to come when God will put an end to sin and violence.

### 1. Michael and the Time of Trouble (Dan. 12:1).

It is when the powers of evil seem to be gaining complete control of events on earth and God's people seem to be overwhelmed that God intervenes on behalf of His saints.

**Who changes the course of history at the end of time? What difficult circumstances accompany these changes? Dan. 12:1.**

Michael is another name for Christ. He is the One who fought with Satan and drove him out of heaven. He is the One who will destroy Satan at the end.

When the power of evil sets up its headquarters in the Promised Land (Dan. 11:45) as if to say that it has taken over the kingdom of heaven, then the true Christ will stand up. Christ's coming will be as visible as the lightning that shines from the east to the west. A cataclysmic event will mark the time when the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of Christ. (See Rev. 11:15.)

Daniel refers to Christ as the "great prince which standeth for the children of thy people" (Dan. 12:1). Daniel's people were the Jews, those to whom had been entrusted the oracles of God. (See Rom. 3:2.) Their true children would be those who had accepted Christ as their Saviour. (See Gal. 3:9.)

**Before the controversy is over on the earth there will "be a time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1). Why will there be such a time of trouble?**

*Consider the following reasons:*

1. The devil is not going to give up without a struggle.
2. The devil steps up his efforts when he knows that his time is short (1 Pet. 5:8).
3. Although Jesus has promised to be with His people unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:20), He has not promised that there will not be persecution. (See John 15:20.) Paul reminded Timothy that the godly will suffer persecution of one kind or another.

4. Daniel's prophecies point to the fact that the wicked hate the righteous.

### What will the time of trouble be like?

The following outline is based on *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-634:

1. The Gospel has been preached to all the world, and the time of the end has come. Matt. 24:14.
2. Those who have accepted the Gospel message and have proved faithful to God's laws are sealed with the seal of God.
3. Probation is closed and no changes can be made. Rev. 22:11.
4. The evil forces have no restrictions placed upon them; there will be no mercy shown anyone.
5. The saints are accused of being the ones through whom judgments have fallen on the earth.
6. The time of trouble is soon to open upon us. The crowning act will come when "Satan himself will personate Christ" (*The Great Controversy* p. 624).

### What can we do now to prepare for the time of trouble?

#### *Some suggestions:*

1. We must accept God's plan of salvation fully.
2. We should place ourselves "in a proper light before the people, to disarm prejudice, and to avert the danger which threatens liberty of conscience."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 616.
3. We must accept God's promises that if we have confessed our sins He will forgive them. (See 1 John 1:9.) We must confess every sin.
4. We must not let Satan lead us to suppose that God will overlook unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life.
5. We must study the Scriptures so that we shall not be deceived by the wiles of the devil. "Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 625.

### 2. Two Resurrections (Dan. 12:2, 3).

#### How does Daniel describe death, and what two contrasting classes of people are to be raised in a special resurrection? Dan. 12:2.

"All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced Him' (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 637.

The Scripture teaches that there is a resurrection of the body. There is the possibility of enjoying life throughout eternity, if the right decisions are made in this life. There is also an execution of judgment that awaits those who reject God's offer of mercy. (See John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.)

Paul makes it clear that the resurrection of the righteous is linked to the resurrection of Christ. Because Christ rose from the dead, the Christian can look forward to a resurrection. (See 1 Cor. 15:13, 14.)

Death is likened to sleep by Jesus. (See John 11:11-14.) To be raised is to be awakened out of sleep. But for the Christian being awakened in the special resurrection or at the second coming of Jesus involves a change. (See 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.) Furthermore, Jesus said He was the resurrection and the life for every believer. (See John 11:25, 26.)



**What part can you and I have in ensuring that we shall be among those who are raised in the first resurrection? Dan. 12:3.**

Shining is a figure of speech that indicates achieving honor and glory. Not everyone rises to points of excellence. In a race or other athletic event only one receives the "gold." But in the Christian race all run and all may win. Yet discipline and effort are involved. (See 1 Cor. 9:24-27.)

### 3. Epilogue (Dan. 12:4-13).

As we reach the end of our study of the book of Daniel we find Daniel's last words. Last words often are quite important. This clearly is the case with what Daniel wrote.

**What important emphasis do we discover as we read the last few verses of the book of Daniel? Dan. 12:4-13.**

*Some suggestions:*

1. The book is to be shut up and sealed till the time of the end. Why? For one thing, prophecy is best understood when it is fulfilled. Daniel's prophecies reach down to the end of time, some 2,500 years since his day. If Daniel could not understand what was being revealed to him (see verse 8) how could anyone else? Certainly the wicked would not understand. But the wise, those who receive enlightenment from God, would understand after the passage of time had brought fulfillment. At the time of the end the book would be opened and there would be an upsurge of the study of prophecy. (See Rev. 10:2.)

2. *Many shall run to and fro.* Commentators suggest that this refers more to the study of the prophecy than to an increase of travel from one point of the earth to another. Increase in knowledge means the understanding of the prophecies rather than the increase in scientific endeavor and discovery.

3. Once again Daniel sees the One who was described in Dan. 10:5, Christ. The Lord assures Daniel that what Daniel has seen and heard is true. He confirms it with an oath.

4. Daniel asks a question regarding the end of all things, and is told to go about his business. Sometimes we want to know more than is revealed. We have to control our curiosity, but always seek to understand what is revealed.

5. *Blessed is he that waiteth* (Dan. 12:12). Blessed are those who have patience when confronted with puzzles and problems within the realm of revelation. It does us no good to invent solutions, or to fret about difficulties. If we are wise, one day we shall understand.

Meanwhile Daniel was assured that he would rest and that he would stand in his lot at the end of days. Could anyone be given a more satisfactory assurance?





**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** If you have a copy available or can secure a copy, read the section in the book *Testimony to Ministers* entitled "The Study of the Books of Daniel and Revelation," pp. 112-118.

"The perils of the last days are upon us, and in our work we are to warn the people of the danger they are in. Let not the solemn scenes which prophecy has revealed be left untouched. If our people were half awake, if they realized the nearness of the events portrayed in the Revelation, a reformation would be wrought in our churches, and many more would believe the message. We have no time to lose; God calls upon us to watch for souls as they that must give an account. Advance new principles, and crowd in the clear-cut truth. It will be as a sword cutting both ways. But be not too ready to take a controversial attitude. There will be times when we must stand still and see the salvation of God. Let Daniel speak, let the Revelation speak, and tell what is truth. But whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope, 'the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star.'"—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 118.

**SUMMARY:** In Daniel 12:9, the prophet is told to go his way. There was doubtless a limit to what Daniel could grasp, given his time and circumstances. We should recognize that there are limits to our own grasp of the full meaning of these prophecies, too. The wicked certainly do not understand even the elementary things; their minds are closed to truth. They cannot know it because they will not. Some close their minds to the truth because they do not want to change their ways. By contrast, the wise are those who recognize the source of wisdom, and ask for it, and in their wisdom they are given insights which help them see the goodness of God and His plan of salvation.

**APPLICATION:** A brief series of lessons such as these cannot do justice to the book of Daniel. The best that can be hoped for is that the lessons have stimulated you to deeper and continued study of this tremendously important book. Not only do you need to study for yourself in order to prepare for the momentous days ahead, but you also need to study in order to be able to help your neighbors and friends be ready before it is too late.

**NOTES:**

# Lessons for Second Quarter, 1987

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the second quarter of 1987 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "To Seek and to Save."

## First Lesson:

### "JOY TO THE WORLD"

MEMORY TEXT: Luke 2:10, 11.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 1:1 through 2:52.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The joy surrounding the first coming of Christ should echo in the hearts of those anticipating His second coming. The Holy Spirit, who filled humble and devout people with joy and confidence then, will fill us with joy and confidence today.

#### OUTLINE:

- I. Signs, Songs and the Spirit (Luke 1:1-56).
- II. The Birth of John (Luke 1:57-80).
- III. Joy to the World (Luke 2:1-52).

## Second Lesson:

### "EXPECTATIONS FULFILLED"

MEMORY TEXT: Luke 4:37.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 3:1 to 4:37.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus' example shows us that we are to be baptized and points the way to the victory that we can gain over sin and Satan.

#### OUTLINE:

- I. Preparation (Luke 3:1-20).
- II. The Beloved Son (Luke 3:21-38).
- III. Victory (Luke 4:1-13).
- IV. The Kingdom Announced (Luke 4:14-37).

## Lessons in Braille:

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 ⅓ rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation. Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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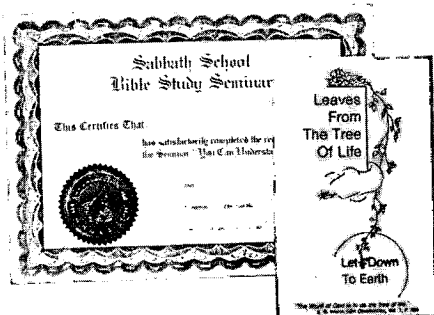
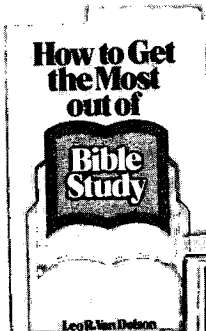
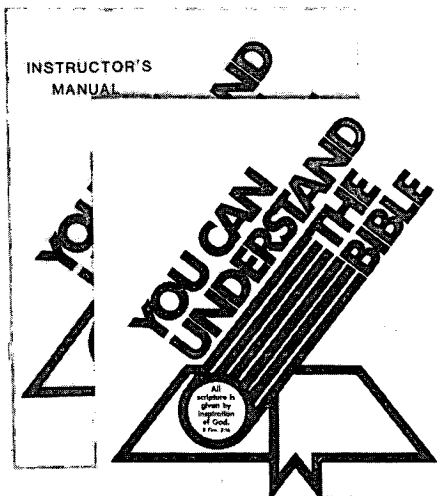
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# SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION

NORTHEAST INDIA UNION

Union	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sab. Sch. Members
Central India	182,525,134	181	46,220	65,673
Northeast India	49,111,266	93	10,826	17,600
Northern	341,154,915	101	17,422	18,682
South India	112,391,632	382	57,604	55,303
Division totals	685,182,947	757	132,072	157,258

*Statistics as of March 31, 1985*

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

- ① Relocation and construction Orissa Boarding School.
- ② Construction of evangelistic center Vasco da Gama, Goa.

